

A black and white photograph of three Marines in a field. One Marine in the center is operating a machine gun mounted on a tripod. Two other Marines are positioned to the left and right, observing. The background shows a hilly landscape with some smoke or mist in the air.

# TRAIN WRECKERS AND GHOST KILLERS

Allied Marines  
in the Korean War

*by Leo J. Daugherty III*

Marines in the Korean War Commemorative Series






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n praise of the British Royal Marines that had been attached to his command since mid-November 1950, Major General Oliver P. Smith, Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, wrote that their services in the recently concluded Chosin Reservoir campaign made “a significant contribution to the holding of Hagaru, which was vital to the [1st Marine] Division.” General Smith’s comments reflected the view held by many Marines, both officers and enlisted, of the fighting abilities of both their British cousins and their Republic of Korea Marine Corps allies. During the three years they fought together on the Korean peninsula, the British, Korean, and U.S. Marines forged bonds that still exist today.

### A Distant War and the Royal Marines

In the early morning hours of 25 June 1950, mechanized and ground units of the North Korean Peoples’ Army (NKPA) rolled across the 38th Parallel into the neighboring Republic of Korea (ROK). Within 48 hours, President

Harry S. Truman placed U.S. forces in Japan on alert. Within a week’s time, elements of the U.S. Eighth Army, then on occupation duty in Japan, were rushed to South Korea to stem the North Korean invasion. As army soldiers, and later Marines of Brigadier General Edward A. Craig’s 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, fought the NKPA to the outskirts of the port of Pusan, the United Nations undertook a series of votes that not only condemned the North Korean invasion, but brought thousands of allied troops to the assistance of the beleaguered ROK. Among the troops assigned to the Korean theater was a hastily assembled unit of Royal Marines stationed in Great Britain and Malaya, where they were already engaged in a guerrilla war against Communist terrorists.

The deployment of Royal Marines to Korea came as the government of Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee announced its intention in the British Parliament to add to the forces being sent to Korea. While there was some disagreement with this decision among the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, and Chief of the Air Staff, Marshal Arthur W. Tedder, both of whom argued that “Britain was already engaged in active operations in Malaya as important ... in countering communist expansion as in Korea,” Admiral Lord Fraser of North Cape, the First Sea Lord, strenuously advocated for the dispatch of a brigade-sized force of Royal Marines to operate in unison with the U.S. Navy as a commando

raiding force. Within two weeks of Lord Fraser’s decision, on 16 August 1950, a 300-man Royal Marine unit was formed and took the name 41 Independent Commando. “Independent” in the unit designation meant the commanding officer had sole responsibility for the unit and did not have to consult higher British headquarters on operational and logistical matters.

The commandos were drawn mostly from active duty units and individual Marine reservists preparing to depart for service in Malaya as part of 3 Commando Brigade. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale, a seasoned Marine veteran who had served with distinction as a member of 3 Commando in the Far East during World War II, 41 Independent Commando began preparations for service in Korea.

The Marines assembled at the Royal Marine Barracks at Bickleigh, Devon, site of the commando school, where they received the customary inoculations and issue of uniforms prior to their deployment to the Far East. Initially, 41 Commando drew from three separate contingents. The first, organized from volunteers and reservists in the United Kingdom, was flown from Bickleigh to Japan in civilian clothes to conceal the ultimate destination and employment. The second group comprised volunteer sailors and Marines drawn from the British Pacific Fleet. This group already had begun an intensive period of training even before the main body of Royal Marines

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ON THE COVER: *Members of the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment man a .50-caliber machine gun in fighting near Hongchon, Korea.* National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A156476

AT LEFT: *Royal Marines take up positions during a raid to destroy enemy supply routes near Songjin, North Korea.* National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428515



character and proud lineage, American military officials permitted the Royal Marines to retain their unique green berets. As the Royal Marines trained on weapons familiarization, small unit tactics and raiding techniques, and conducted physical fitness exercises, Admiral Joy decided to use them as a raiding force along the enemy's long and vulnerable coastline.

## Organization and Training

Like many U.S. Marines sent to Korea as part of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, the majority of men recruited for 41 Commando were World War II veterans, although there were a few new recruits and navy volunteers. Many, like Sergeant Major Trevor-Dodds, a European kayaking champion, were of "superb quality and spirit" and had volunteered for service in Korea. Each was a combat swimmer, demolitions expert, or heavy weapons specialist. These talents proved useful

*Vadm C. Turner Joy, USN, Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, a proponent of amphibious raiding and other special operations, was instrumental in the deployment of the Royal Marines to Korea and their subsequent assignment to the 1st Marine Division.*

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC352920



arrived from Great Britain and had been organized into a rifle section known as the Fleet Volunteers. The third group came from a reinforcement draft destined for 3, 40, 42, or 45 Commando in Malaya and was on board the British troopship HMT *Devonshire*, which had been diverted to Japan in early August. Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, and Admiralty

officials in London and Washington, D.C. decided the Royal Marines would operate with the U.S. Navy and Marines.

After arriving at Camp McGill, a U.S. Army base 50 miles south of Tokyo at Takehama and near the U.S. Navy base at Yokosuka, the Commando received a complete field issue of uniforms, weapons, and equipment supplied by the U.S. Army. To maintain their distinct

## 41 Commando Weapons and Equipment

When the British Royal Marine's 41 Independent Commando deployed to Camp McGill, Japan, in early August 1950, they carried with them their standard British army issued weapons. To alleviate any logistical problem, the Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, and British military officials decided 41 Commando would be issued the same weapons as those issued to the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Army. This practice not only simplified the replacement of damaged weapons and supply of ammunition, but enabled the Royal Marines to become familiar with U.S. weapons and facilitated their training activities.

Personal weapons used by the Commando included the M1 Garand semiautomatic rifle and M1 Carbines. Individual Marines (including their officers) preferred the reliable M1 Garand rifle, which held up reasonably well under extreme battlefield conditions in Korea, particularly during the Chosin Reservoir campaign. While many Marines originally preferred to carry the lightweight M1 Carbine because of the high volume of fire it could deliver, it proved extremely unreliable and was prone to malfunction in the sub-zero temperatures of

North Korea. The official submachine gun, which the British disliked, was the M3 .45-caliber "Grease Gun," similar to the 9mm Sten gun the Commando originally carried. A number of old 1926 Thompson submachine guns were acquired and used during raids. All officers and noncommissioned officers carried the coveted Colt .45-caliber pistol.

The standard Bren light machine gun gave way to the American Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), which fired .30-caliber ammunition from a 20-round magazine and was organic to the U.S. Marine rifle squad. While the BAR became standard issue to 41 Commando, they nonetheless lamented the loss of their beloved Bren guns. Despite the problems the Commando had in maintaining the effectiveness and operability of their M1 Garands and BARs in the sub-zero cold of Korea, the weapons nonetheless proved reliable when properly maintained.

Leaving their Vickers machine guns behind, the Royal Marines employed the air-cooled, bipod-mounted M1919A4 light machine gun that came with a booster cup that enabled it to fire 900 rounds per minute. Other machine guns used were the air-cooled A4 .30-caliber ver-

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-438727





sion and M1917A1 water-cooled version on a heavy tripod. The heavy weapons group initially used the M1919 machine guns, although they switched to the M1917, which was comparable to their Vickers machine guns. The Marines also employed the Browning M2 .50-caliber machine guns for use on the islands in Wonsan harbor and for targets inland.

U.S. Marines issued 41 Commando the standard 60mm mortars without a tripod, as well the 81mm mortars, which proved far more effective than its standard 3-inch mortar. To battle the thick-armored enemy T-34 tanks, the Royal Marines received both the 2.36-inch "bazooka" rocket launchers and the 3.5-inch rocket launcher. The Commando's heavy weapons group also employed several 75mm recoilless rifles, which they used with great effect against enemy emplacements and armored vehicles.

Communications gear was U.S. Marine standard-issue, at least a generation ahead of the British equivalent. The troop net radio was the short range SCR 536, which was shapped like a large handset with pull out antenna. The net set was the SCR 300, which they adopted as the

"British 31 Set." The ANG/RC 9 or "Angry 9," provided 41 Commando with long-range communications capabilities. The Angry 9's most notable characteristic was its ability to be powered by a hand crank.

Along with the standard U.S. Army fatigues, during the Chosin Reservoir campaign the commandos wore normal underwear, longjohns, blouse or Angola shirt, a woolen jersey, fatigue jacket and trousers, a pile-lined parka with hood issued to the U.S. Marines, underneath which they wore their traditional green beret, and ski mittens with woolen inner liners and leather outers. Of all the clothing items, the most unpopular was the standard-issue footwear, or shoepacks, which were rubber-soled and "gutta-percha, calf-length, lace-up" boots with felt insoles that were prone to become damp and cumbersome. These shoepacks contributed to many cases of frostbite as the feet would perspire and thus freeze when the temperatures dipped. Much of the original British-issue cold-weather gear came from stocks used during World War II, which often dated as far back as World War I when British forces briefly intervened on behalf of the pro-Czarist forces in Archangel during the Russian Civil War.

time and again during the raids along the North Korean coast. The choice of men with such specialized abilities reflected Drysdale's recognition for the need of such combat-related skills as the Commando assembled and prepared for battle.

As journalist and Member of Parliament Thomas E. Driberg said of the men of 41 Commando in his 20 December 1950 broadcast on British Broadcasting Corporation's Home Service:

These lads grew remarkably quickly into the mood and outlook that seem to be characteristic of this special kind of outfit: one might define it as a nonchalant self-sufficiency, a debonair assurance that is never arrogant, a self-mocking toughness. The common idea of Commando "toughness" is wrong. They are not muscle-bound supermen. Many of them are quite slight and trim—physically compact, mentally alert. Their training fits them perfectly for such jobs as they had to do.

The unit was organized into three rifle troops, B, C, and D, and a headquarters troop. Each rifle troop numbered approximately 45 to 50 men commanded by a captain, while the small headquarters troop consisted of administrative, motor transport, medical, communications, and a 20-man heavy weapons group. At the outbreak of the Korean War, 41 Independent Commando consisted of 300 men of all ranks. Its strength fluctuated during the first year of the war as the fighting became more intense and the number of casualties mounted.

While 41 Commando included men with different military specialties, only engineers and signalers continued to perform their specific duties. The remainder fought as riflemen. Unit organization of the Commando was ad hoc prior to joining the 1st Marine Division in November 1950. The heavy weapons group, which consisted of mortars, machine guns, and antitank weapons, as well as assault engineers, remained attached to the headquarters troop.

Of all the Royal Marine organizations, the heavy weapons group was the most flexible. The men assigned to this group were trained on all weapons in compliance with the standard Royal Marine emphasis on cross-training, which was designed to ensure that if one six-man team went down, the second could fill in without a lapse in covering fire. The value of such cross-training was evident during the defense of Wonsan Harbor when the heavy weapons group assisted the island garrison by manning the four mortars, four machine guns, and 75mm recoilless rifle on Hwangto-do.

Since the Royal Marines would be operating primarily with American forces, they were issued standard U.S. firearms and other field equipment, including what the British called "battle kit," or individual equipment. This alleviated the logistics problem of integrating British equipment within the U.S. Navy or Marine Corps supply system. The use of American uniforms and equipment made it easier to supply and re-



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-421628

*Royal Marines line the deck of the USS Perch (ASSP 313) as the submarine leaves Japan for Korea. Commissioned in 1944, the Perch operated out of Hawaii and Australia during World War II and was one of only two submarines to receive the Submarine Combat Patrol insignia during the*

*Korean War. In the 1960s she conducted special operations in Vietnam and was decommissioned in 1971. The huge cylindrical watertight locker on the afterdeck stored inflatable boats and other equipment, prompting the nickname, "Pregnant Perch."*

equip when replacements were needed. A handful of veteran Royal Marines had used American M1 Garand rifles during World War II and were familiar with its operation.

As the Commando prepared for battle, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur questioned the use of British Marines even before their first taste of combat. In a rather terse exchange with Vice Admiral Joy, MacArthur questioned not only the necessity and security of conducting such raids along the North Korean coastline, but also the use of the Commando instead of the Navy's underwater demolition teams (UDT). Joy, an admirer of the Royal Marines, responded:

The 41 Royal Marine Commando was formed and trained especially to conduct commando raids. Plans are ready for destruction of several key points between latitudes 40 and 41 on east coast.

Believe they can be executed without serious risk. Submarine crew and commandos are keen to fight and gain experience for evaluation of this type of organization.

Joy continued to defend the use of the Royal Marines as a raiding force and MacArthur eventually relented.

### First Actions

In the stealth of night, a troop of 41 Commando boarded the transport submarine USS *Perch* (ASSP 313) for its first raid against an enemy railroad installation and supply line. Adhering to MacArthur's explicit orders forbidding the use of no more than 70 individuals, the 63 Marines of the troop adjusted to life on board the *Perch* and continued to train for combat.

Admiral Joy's statement that both American submariners and Royal Marines were "keen" for a

fight was substantiated in the comments made in the log of the *Perch* as the Commando prepared for its first operation from the submarine. Leaving Japan on board a specially outfitted high-speed transport, the Marines then transferred to the *Perch*, which had been assigned to carry them to the objective area. Even as the Marines sailed toward the enemy coastline, they continued an intensive, round-the-clock training program, in which they "quickly impressed the Americans with their enthusiasm and skill." The log of the *Perch* included more praise, noting:

These [Royal Marines] were experienced raiders with a "can do" attitude comparable to that of the *Perch*'s. They seemed to enjoy having more thrown at them than they could possibly assimilate in the short time available, and rose to the occasion by becoming a well-trained, and coordinated submarine raid-

ing team in a remarkably short time.

Royal Marine Fred Heyhurst was even more blunt in his remarks when describing the “remarkably short time” (two weeks) it took for American seamen and British Marines to become a formidable team. Heyhurst stated: “There was a tremendous spirit, to learn all we needed to know and get on with the job. We would get hang of one [U.S.] weapon and go straight out for another, whatever the time was. ... It was the best unit anyone could have joined.” Originally planned to provide relief for the allied forces, which had been pushed into a perimeter around Pusan, the raid was delayed approximately three weeks because of concerns about enemy lines.

There was, indeed, a short learning curve, as MacArthur’s planned Inchon landing drew near. Having been in the Far East only a month, the British Marines crammed weeks of training into days as a detachment of 41 Commando on board the British frigate HMS *Whitesand Bay* (F 633) prepared for its first action off the west coast of Korea, which came on the night of 12 September 1950. Intended to act in unison with a U.S. Army raiding battalion that never deployed, the detachment, commanded by Lieutenant Derek Pound and referred to as Pound Force, found itself attached to the 1st Marine Division, which was only hours away from landing at the port of Inchon on 15 September. Pound Force, designated a Special Activities Group by U.S. Army Major General Edward M. Almond’s X Corps, launched a diversionary raid against North Korean army elements at Kunsan. At the conclusion of the raid, the Commando reembarked on board

the *Whitesand Bay* and sailed into position off Inchon, where it came under operational control of General Smith’s 1st Marine Division on 17 September, two days after the Inchon landings. During subsequent actions ashore, Lieutenant Pound’s detachment of Royal Marines accompanied their U.S. Marine counterparts during the 1st Marine Division’s push to Seoul. Acting as a motorized reconnaissance force, the Commando drove as far inland as Kimpo Airfield. After seizure of the airfield, they rejoined other Royal Marines conducting hit-and-run raids against North Korean railroad and communications lines. Another team of Royal Marines served with a Marine air and naval gunfire liaison officer directing naval gunfire from the supporting British warships participating in the Inchon landing.

## The Train Wreckers

With the South Korean capital under United Nations control, General MacArthur’s attention turned to the pursuit of the retreating NKPA. Both U.S. Marines and Royal Marines were withdrawn to prepare for a subsequent end run against the east coast port of Wonsan. While the 1st Marine Division reassembled at the port of Inchon, the Royal Marines reembarked on board their respective ships and sailed back to Japan for more training and to await further orders. While in Japan, 41 Commando participated in two major raids against a section of railway line along the enemy’s northeastern coastline between Chongjin and Hungnam.

As the *Perch* approached the first target area west of Tachon on the evening of 30 September, she

*Royal Marines plant demolition charges under the railroad tracks of enemy supply lines along the eastern coast of Korea. During the raid, the Marines demolished a section of embankment under the rail line and concealed explosive charges with pressure activated detonators in two adjacent railway tunnels.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428242





was detected by enemy radar. With the landing party already in the rubber boats, disaster was narrowly averted when the motor on the skimmer refused to start. Enemy activity ashore soon made it clear that a trap had been set and the *Perch* re-embarked the Commando and withdrew.

The next morning, the *Perch* rendezvoused with the destroyers USS *Maddox* (DD 731) and USS *Herbert J. Thomas* (DD 883) to develop an alternative plan. The new plan called for the *Thomas* to create a diversion at the original target while the *Perch* carried out the landing at a second site. On the night of 1 October 1950, 41 Commando landed from the *Perch* on the coast above Hungnam and west of Tanchon, where a day earlier they had been forced to cancel a mission when a pre-landing reconnaissance of the objective area detected an enemy patrol boat guarding the entrance of two adjoining rail tunnels, which were the intended targets. Under cover of darkness and in a known mined area, the *Perch* drew close to shore. After a quick periscope survey of the coastline, the skipper of the submarine gave the OK to land the Commando. Numbering 67 strong, they boarded 10 black rubber rafts and paddled ashore. Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale assumed personal command of 41 Commando's first major raid against enemy supply lines.

The Commando stepped ashore unopposed. While one group of Drysdale's force hurriedly planted explosives beneath the steel rails of the targeted tracks, two other groups fanned out along the flanks to stave off enemy attacks. The demolitions were then detonated, resulting in a pile of twisted rails and a destroyed rail culvert. With the mission completed, the commandos were recalled to the



Photo courtesy of the Naval Historical Center  
*Fellow Marines and the ship's company gather on the deck of the Perch for the burial of Marine Peter R. Jones. For many Marines it was their first burial at sea. For some it was their first military funeral, but it would not be their last.*

*Perch*. With one troop covering their withdrawal, the British Marines found themselves in a furious firefight with the fully alerted enemy. In the action that followed, they suffered their first combat fatality as enemy guards killed Private Peter R. Jones.

Later, while the *Perch* lay to in the Sea of Japan, a solemn ceremony was held on her afterdeck. On a stretcher covered by the Union Jack rested the body of Private Jones. Drysdale read a brief service and the body was committed to the deep. Eight Commando riflemen fired three volleys in tribute and the two American destroyers each paid their respects with a full 21-gun salute.

As was the custom, the captain of the *Perch*, Lieutenant Commander Robert D. Quinn, arranged for the ensign to be folded and sent to the next of kin. The ensign and Jones' medals are now displayed in the Royal Marines' Museum alongside the U.N. flag flown by the *Perch*.

Several days later, another force

of 125 Royal Marines, under the command of 31-year-old Major Dennis L. St. M. Aldridge, embarked on board the converted American fast destroyer-transport USS *Bass* (APD 124) and USS *Wantuck* (APD 125), each of which came equipped with four landing craft that could accommodate 162 men. The significance of the raid was twofold. This was to be the first raid against the 120-mile stretch of North Korea's rail line, which ran along the northeast coast. It also was the first commando raid launched from a destroyer.

Once ashore in the objective area south of Songjin, approximately 80 miles from the North Korean border with the Soviet Union and even less from the Chinese border, the Marines split into a number of parties. The "powder-train" carried explosives up to a railway tunnel; demolition experts laid the charges and set the fuses; others guarded the beach and boats and checked out the buildings between the beach and railway. All went like clockwork.

Journalist Thomas Driberg, who accompanied the Marines, described the results:

We "got the hell out of it" as the Yanks say, as quickly as we could. It was a terrific moment for all the chaps—many of whom ... had never been in anything like it, the real thing, before when, halfway back to the ship, we suddenly saw the sky torn by a vivid orange flash, and the tremendous roar as the tunnel went up in the air and knew that our mission had been successful.

Unfortunately, the Marines suffered two casualties, the group's



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-438738

*Commandos from the USS Horace A. Bass (APD 124) load an assault boat for a raid on installations deep behind enemy lines. Commissioned in 1944, the Bass first saw combat at Okinawa and is credited with sinking a Japanese submarine in the final days of World War II. In addition to carrying out raids in Korea, she participated in the evacuation of Chinese Nationalist troops to Formosa and Vietnamese civilians from Haiphong to Cam Rahn Bay in the wake of the French defeat in 1954.*

youngest Marine and a World War II veteran. Both were buried at sea. Despite the loss, the raid, which “involved transporting quantities of limpet mines and explosives ashore in rubber dinghies through the surf and currents,” was highly successful in disrupting enemy rail lines and soon gave rise to the nickname the Royal Marines proudly adopted as a trademark of their mission in Korea, “the train wreckers.”

As the navies assigned to the United Nations forces held supremacy in the waters off the Korean coast, attention now shifted inland as MacArthur’s forces drove further north in what appeared to be a war-ending offensive against the retreating NKPA. As the military situation on the Korean peninsula rapidly changed, so to did the mission of the Royal Marines. They regrouped and headed back to Camp McGill to reorganize and

train in small unit tactics, cold weather operations, and company and battalion weapons. The just-completed coastal raids would be the last in which the commandos would use rubber rafts. Following these two missions, the commandos

used landing craft in what they termed “dry ramp landings.”

In his postwar account of the services of 41 Commando, Drysdale noted the techniques used by his Marines had evolved from those used by the U.S. Marines during World War II, particularly those of Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson’s raiders, and had been adapted in Korea “to suit the prevailing circumstances.” Drysdale, who had been impressed with the use of submarines in raiding missions, later wrote: “it is enough to say that all who took part in the operation were deeply impressed by the obvious potential of a new form of submarine warfare.” He added that what made the raids an even greater success was the planning, cooperation between the naval and ground commanders, and the adequate time for training and rehearsal prior to launching the operations.

As U.N. forces pushed toward the Yalu River and the Royal Marines trained at Camp McGill, it was suggested the commandos be attached to the 1st Marine Division as a reconnaissance force. At first rejecting such a proposal,

*A bazooka team from 41 Independent Commando takes its position during a raid on enemy rail and supply routes near Songjin. The raids brought this vulnerable area of North Korea under all forms of naval attack.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428248



Drysdale, who now foresaw a more limited role for his men as the prospects for further raids diminished, revised the training of the Royal Marines with an increased emphasis on conventional warfare skills rather than commando-type operations. Hoping to rejoin the fighting, Drysdale initiated a request through Rear Admiral Arleigh C. Burke, USN, who was then Vice Admiral Joy's deputy

chief of staff, that the Royal Marines be attached to their American counterparts at the earliest possible moment. While it was too late to add the Commando to the landings at Wonsan, Admiral Burke sent the following message to General Smith: "British 41st Royal Marine Commandos available and anxious to join in your division earliest. Suggest this excellent unit be employed."

General Smith eagerly wanted the troops, although there was no reply for 10 days as General Almond, miffed at being bypassed in the chain-of-command, withheld final approval. Eventually, after the intervention of Admiral Burke and the British naval attaché, Commander John "Jock" M. D. Gray, RN, X Corps, gave grudging approval. Smith was anxious to employ Drysdale's Marines

## Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale, RM

Colonel Douglas Burns Drysdale was born in Hampstead, a suburb of London, on 2 October 1916. He spent the majority of his youth in Argentina, where he developed a life-long passion for horsemanship, polo playing, and hunting.

Commissioned a subaltern in September 1935 in the Royal Marines, he was given charge of HMS *Renown's* Marine detachment. He remained on board the *Renown* during the first three years of World War II. During the occupation of Iceland, Lieutenant Drysdale served as the staff officer of "Force Fork," the combined force consisting of the 2d Battalion, Royal Marines, and a coastal battery. He was promoted to captain in June 1942 and assigned to the staff of the British Admiralty Delegation, Washington, D.C. Here, Captain Drysdale had his first contacts with U.S. Marines when he was attached to Headquarters United States Marine Corps as a liaison officer until 1943 when he became brigade major of 3 Special Service Brigade. He remained with the brigade for the rest of World War II.

In September 1945, during the Burma campaign, 3 Special Service Brigade was assigned to carry out Operation Zipper, an amphibious operation that was canceled when the war ended. Major Drysdale was to serve as the commanding officer of 44 Commando during that operation. For outstanding service in that theater, the British government appointed Drysdale a Member of the British Empire (MBE). After the war, Major Drysdale served on the staff of the British army staff college at Camberley. He then joined the staff of the Officer's School where he was promoted to acting lieutenant colonel and assigned to command 41 Independent Royal Marine Commando.

His command of 41 Commando in Korea was to be the highlight of a distinguished career. For his actions at the Chosin Reservoir, as well as his leadership of 41 Commando, Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale was awarded two Silver Stars and a Distinguished Service Order.

Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale led 41 Commando until



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428253

late 1951, when he was relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Ferris N. Grant. He then served as the Royal Marine representative at the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, from 1952 to 1954. After leaving Quantico, Drysdale was appointed Commandant of the Royal Marine's Noncommissioned Officers School. He was then assigned to the staff of the Commandant General of Royal Marines, where he was promoted to colonel in June 1961. He was selected to command 3 Commando Brigade prior to his medical retirement in January 1962. He moved to Norfolk, England, in 1978, where he died on 22 June 1990 at the age of 73.



as a reconnaissance force in unison with the division's Reconnaissance Company to protect the division's flanks. On 16 November 1950, 41 Commando set sail from Yokosuka, Japan, on board the USS *President Jackson* (T-APA 18) to join the 1st Marine Division at Hungnam, North Korea. The Royal Marines and their American counterparts were about to participate in one of the fiercest and most memorable actions in their respective institutional histories.

### Task Force Drysdale

On 20 November 1950, Drysdale's 41 Commando arrived at Hungnam and prepared to enter the lines alongside the 1st Marine Division at the Chosin Reservoir. After a brief period of cold-weather acclimation, the Commando joined the division as an attached unit. Its strength upon arrival was 14 officers and 221 enlisted. On 23 November, the division issued Operations Order 23-50, directing the Commando to "conduct operations to locate and destroy enemy forces in the Hagaru-ri, Samdae-pyong, Koto-ri area," coordinating its activities with the 1st and 7th Marines. Three days later, the order was modified to move the Commando to Yudam-ni to prepare for operations in the direction of Sinpo-ri (eight miles southwest of Yudam-ni) to protect the division's left flank in coordination with the 7th Marines. The latter order would never be carried out.

After enjoying Thanksgiving Day at Hungnam, 41 Commando moved out by truck on 28 November for Koto-ri, its stores including heavy weapons still in crates. Progress was slow as the convoy climbed the 4,000 feet to Funchilin Pass over the narrow, twisting road cut out of the rocky hillside. Arriving in late afternoon,

each troop was ordered to take up defensive positions on the perimeter and to dig in. Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale reported to Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, the commanding officer of the 1st Marines, who informed Drysdale his unit would continue its journey on the morrow and that he would take command of a combat task force to open the road to Hagaru-ri.

Even before 41 Commando arrived at Koto-ri on the afternoon of the 28th, elements of the 79th and 89th CCF Divisions had slammed into the Marine's perimeter at Yudam-ni during the night of 27 November. Another enemy division, the 59th, then completed an end sweep to the southeast and moved against the 14-mile stretch of road south to Hagaru-ri. Roadblocks were established between Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri, and also between Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri. Bridges were blown along the route. The enemy now threatened the very lifeline of the 1st Marine Division. What was to have been an administrative move for 41 Commando now became a combat operation.

Augmented by U.S. Marine and Army units, Drysdale's force was to clear the enemy from the road and surrounding terrain between Koto-ri and Hagaru-ri, and then reinforce the Marines at Hagaru-ri. The force had three primary objectives to seize before the final goal could be achieved. With 41 Commando in the lead, the first objective was to seize the hill east of the road just outside Koto-ri. The second was to permit Captain Carl L. Sitter's Company G, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, with Captain Charles L. Peckham's Company B, 31st Infantry (U.S. Army) following in reserve, to pass through and strike out against Hill 1236 further north. The third objective was to seize Hill 1182,

which was three miles north of Koto-ri on the east side of the road. These three units, together with the subsequent addition of 24 tanks equipped with 90mm guns from the division's 1st Tank Battalion, and five tanks from the Antitank Company attached to the 1st Marines, made up the fighting component of the task force. In addition to the combat portion of the force, there were detachments from Headquarters Battalion; 1st Signal Battalion; 7th Motor Transport Battalion; Service Company, 1st Tank Battalion; military police; and other groups and individuals from the 1st Marine Division. Also attached to this small but powerful force was a platoon from the U.S. Army's 377th Truck Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Alfred J. Catania, USA. Named Task Force Drysdale, the composite unit set about to break through enemy lines that had cut the main road leading to Hagaru-ri. "It will not be a walk in the sun," Drysdale said at the end of his pep talk to the Marines of Company G.

Fifty years before, U.S. Marines and Royal Marines had fought together during the infamous Boxer Rebellion of 1900. Now they prepared to do the same against, strangely, the same enemy, the Chinese.

At 0930 on the cold and snowy morning of 29 November, Task Force Drysdale set out from Koto-ri with a 800-man force, of which 235 were from 41 Commando, 205 from Company G, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, 190 from Company B, 31st Infantry, and more than 150 service, headquarters, and miscellaneous troops. Trucks of the 7th Motor Transport Battalion supplied transportation for the Marines of Company G, while the Army's 377th Transportation Truck Company carried the soldiers of



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5320

*While waiting to join the 7th Marines at Yudam-ni where they would conduct reconnaissance patrols on the division's left flank, the Royal Marines were billeted for a few days with the*

*1st Engineer Battalion at Hambung. While there, they took over some of the night security duties.*

Company B, and the vehicles of the 1st Tank Battalion's Service Company hauled 41 Commando.

As Drysdale's task force moved out, a massive artillery barrage began while Marine and Navy aircraft plastered enemy troop concentrations in the hills surrounding the road north of Koto-ri with fragmentary bombs and napalm. The Royal Marines seized the first objective with relative ease. But Captain Sitter's company met heavier resistance in its attempt to seize Hill 1236, about one-and-a-half miles north of Koto-ri. There, the defending Chinese forces had prepared elaborate defenses along the ridgeline. Fighting his way to the top of the summit, Master Sergeant Rocco A. Zullo maneuvered to within 200 yards and fired

several 3.5-inch rocket rounds into the entrenched Chinese forces, forcing them out of their positions where Sitter's Marines proceeded to decimate their ranks with small arms fire. The assault on Hill 1236 cost Sitter's company 14 casualties. The commandos and Company G then moved about a mile up the road toward Hill 1182, the third objective. There the enemy put up a stout defense with mortars and well-placed machine gun fire from fortified positions on the high ground. As Company G assaulted the Chinese positions, Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale ordered Captain Sitter to break off the attack, withdraw to the road below, and wait for new instructions. Prior to the move, Drysdale had received a message from Colonel Puller

advising him that tanks from Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, would be available at approximately 1300 that afternoon. Drysdale decided to wait for the additional support to minimize further casualties before setting out again. With less than two miles covered, the impetus of the attack was now stopped.

Two platoons of tanks from Company D, reinforced by the tank platoon of the Antitank Company from Regimental Combat Team 5, reached Koto-ri at noon after moving out from Majong-dong. Meanwhile, the tanks from Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, less the 2d Platoon, which was attached to 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, departed Tongjong-ni and arrived at Koto-ri

about 1500, too late to join Drysdale's renewed assault. The company was ordered to bring up Task Force Drysdale's rear.

At 1350, Drysdale's task force resumed its advance. Shortly after moving out, Captain Sitter's company encountered heavy small arms fire from houses along the right side of the road. Sitter quickly ordered the accompanying tanks forward to provide fire support for his men. The tanks opened up with their 90mm guns, flushing the Chinese from their fortified positions. The Marines then destroyed the enemy soldiers as they ran from the buildings. Thereafter, Communist forces repeatedly sought to delay the relief column with harassing fires. In one instance, enemy mortars and machine guns scored a direct hit on one of the trucks carrying Company G's 3d Platoon, wounding every man in the truck. Despite these and similar attacks, Task Force Drysdale continued to slowly snake its way along the road from Koto-ri to Hagaru-ri.

Further delays ensued while the tanks made their way around shell craters and roadblocks. For Task Force Drysdale, the advance consisted of brief periods of movement alternated with interludes in which everyone scrambled from the trucks to engage in firefights. Finally, about 1615 that afternoon, the column came to a complete halt about four miles north of Koto-ri.

### In Hell Fire Valley

As the last tanks of Company B rumbled out of the Koto-ri perimeter to join the convoy, Drysdale questioned the wisdom of continuing the advance, given the road conditions and the tenacity of the Chinese forces opposing him. While concerned for the number

of casualties Drysdale had incurred in such a short advance, General Smith nonetheless believed it vital to relieve Hagaru-ri, and thus ordered the British officer to "push through if at all possible."

As his tanks refueled in a dry streambed, Drysdale's force received overhead fire support as air strikes from Marine Fighter Squadron 312, directed by forward air controller Captain Norman Vining, kept the Chinese from overwhelming his exposed position. Again more time was lost. Upon resuming the advance, unit integrity disappeared as the combat troops, who had dismounted from their vehicles to refuel, became intermingled with headquarters troops.

Not far south of the halfway point, increased enemy fire caused the column to come to an abrupt halt. The terrain was extremely foreboding and well suited for an ambush. The high ground rose sharply on the right side of the road and, bordered by the Changjin River and wooded hills, a frozen creek wound through a plain several hundred yards wide on the left. This valley was given the ominous name Hell Fire Valley by Drysdale. It was an appropriate name, as the Marines, soldiers, and commandos would discover when the enemy sprang a well-laid trap in what became an all-night fight by half the men of the convoy.

As the men of Task Force Drysdale piled out of the trucks to once again return fire against the well-entrenched enemy, a mortar shell crashed into one of the trucks at the far end of the valley, creating a roadblock that split the column in two. Using small arms and mortar fire, the enemy took advantage of the confusion caused by the mortar fire and pinned down the troops who had scram-

bled for cover behind vehicles or in ditches along the roadside. Chinese fire prevented the disabled truck from being pushed out of the way, which in turn caused a major delay in the advance of the relief column. Nonetheless, the head of the column, which consisted of Company D, 1st Tanks, Company G, nearly three-fourths of 41 Commando, and a few Army infantrymen, continued its advance toward Hagaru-ri with Drysdale in command. Left behind were the remaining Royal Marines, most of Company B, 31st Infantry, and practically all of the division headquarters and support troops. Despite the confusion that ensued after the column had been cut off from the forward elements of the task force, the remaining troops quickly established a defensive perimeter "before it was too late." As U.S. Marine Sergeant Charles Dickerson later recalled:

Two thirds of the column was cut off, the first third going on up the road further. The road ran in sort of an "S" shape, not extreme, and at the left there was a small ditch. At the right there was quite a large ditch, and at the right of that was a railroad track, then another ditch. And further to the right was a plateau 20 feet higher than the road. Then there were rice paddies on further about 100 to 200 yards, and there was a river; and on the other side of the river was the mountain. The Chinese came from the front between the hill and this plateau. They came down the ditch from the far side of the railroad track and over the road at the front of the column. They came to the rear out of the valley and across a culvert.



On the left rear, they came down the mountain to the culvert and the rice paddy area.

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur A. Chidester, the assistant division logistics officer and the senior Marine officer caught in the cut off column, ordered the vehicles unable to proceed to turn around and head back to Koto-ri. Before his orders could be carried out, a Chinese attack severed this convoy about 200 yards to the north of him. Other enemy attacks cut the road to the south. In the ensuing attack, Chidester was wounded and eventually captured as the Chinese troops poured fire into the exposed Marine column.

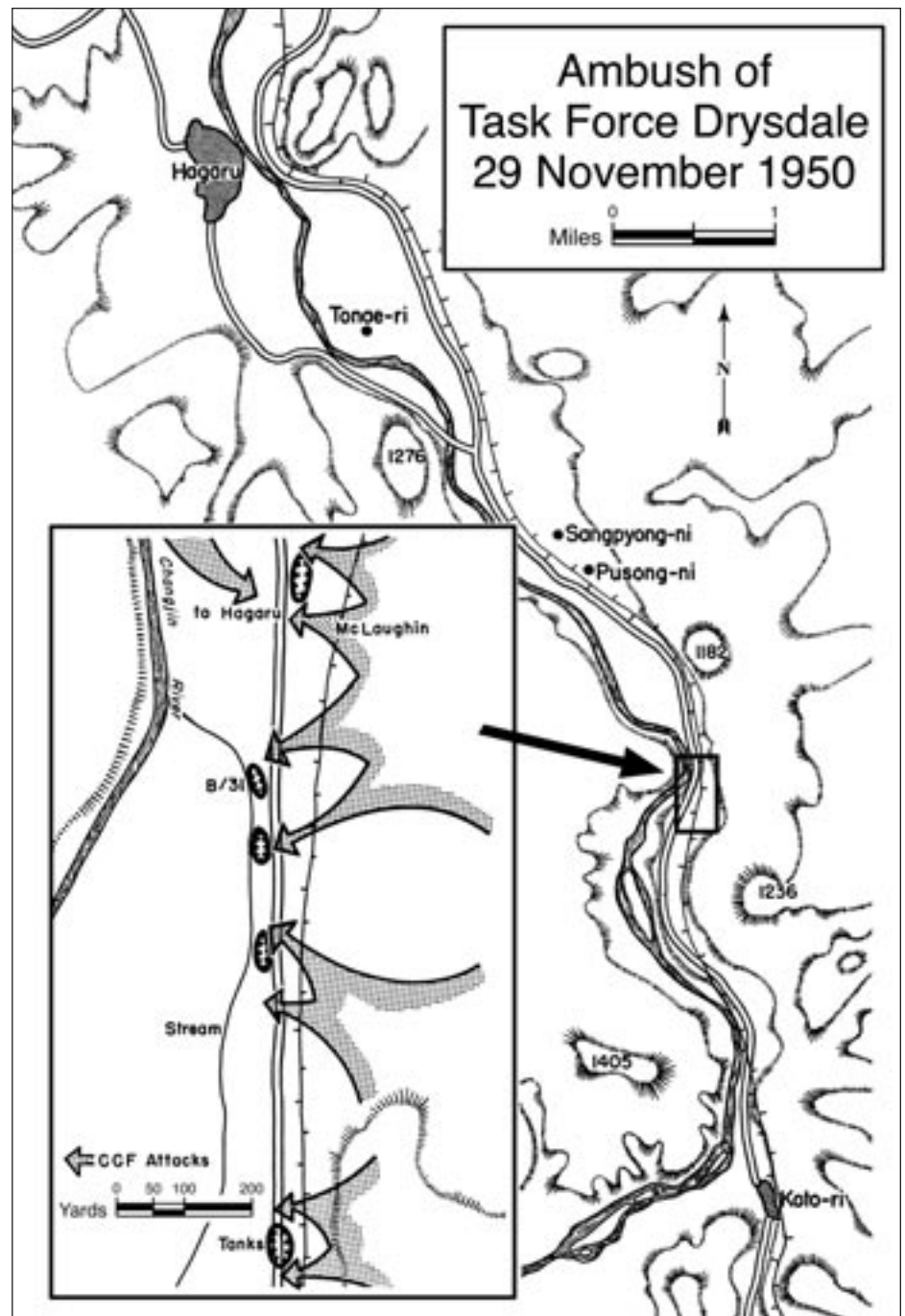
One of the problems encountered by the task force as it marched through Hell Fire Valley was the lack of communications. As X Corps' assistant operations officer, Major John N. McLaughlin, recalled: "There were really no internal communications in the column. Drysdale had no communication with the Marine company or the Army company or the tank company. And the tanks were told to move out and continue to move." Despite the lack of internal communications with his attached units and external communications with higher headquarters and circling aircraft, Drysdale planned to continue moving forward, fighting all the way if necessary, to reach Hagaru-ri.

While portions of Task Force Drysdale moved forward and Chidester's Marines fought off the attacking enemy, the commandos and soldiers left in Hell Fire Valley, with the assistance of Marine air strikes, continued to fend off probing attacks by the Chinese, whose onslaughts began to subside as darkness set in. With the arrival of sunset, however, the commandos,

Marines, and soldiers of the 31st Infantry waited for the inevitable Chinese night assaults.

Strengthening their positions, the commandos and soldiers established three defensive perimeters over a distance of 1,200 yards from north to south. The northern end of the defensive perimeter was centered on the village of Pusdong-ni and was the largest of the three positions. Led by Major McLaughlin, it contained a

hodgepodge of troops caught north of the second fracture in Task Force Drysdale's lines. McLaughlin's group comprised approximately 130 to 140 men and included the soldiers from the 31st Infantry, commanded by Captain Charles Peckham, Chief Warrant Officer Loyd V. Dirst and a group of U.S. Marine military policemen, some Royal Marines, various U.S. Marine service and headquarters personnel, and Associated Press



photographer Frank Noel. McLaughlin said his immediate concern was to organize a defense to prevent a Chinese breakthrough to the main column.

As Chinese soldiers resumed their attack on the night of 29 November, the Marines, soldiers, and commandos put up a spirited defense. McLaughlin said the fighting lasted all night “till about 5 o’clock in the morning when we’d run out of ammunition.” Despite the hopelessness of their situation, McLaughlin’s group bought Drysdale’s main force precious time. What saved the other elements of Task Force Drysdale that followed behind McLaughlin’s force was the quick thinking of McLaughlin and Chief Warrant Officer Dirst, the other Marine officer present. This made all the difference that night, as Technical Sergeant Charles L. Harrison recalled:

Well, at the start, just after we were pinned down, it was rather confused. It was quite mixture and a jumble of troops. There were British, U.S. Army, and Marines. As far as I know, there weren’t over forty or fifty Marines; but as we were pinned down and the fire got pretty intense, and everybody bailed out of their trucks, there was a certain amount of confusion. Now, I’m speaking about the particular area I was in. I think the organization of the whole outfit into a fighting team could be accredited to Marine officers—Major McLaughlin and Warrant Officer Dirst—that is from my own viewpoint. There may have been others, but I thought that Warrant Officer Dirst and Major McLaughlin were a very good steadying factor.

They calmed the troops down and ordered them to the proper places where they could give the most firepower. During the entire fight, they both exposed themselves; walking up and down that road directing the fire and moving troops from one point to another. Warrant Officer Dirst was seriously wounded during the fight there—it must have been about three-thirty in the morning, I suppose. There was heavy fire from both sides all night; casualties were high on both sides; there were several attempted rushes by the enemy—and that’s just about the size of it. It went on that way until almost dawn when our ammunition was practically gone, and then the negotiations for surrender came through.

As for the performance of the commandos trapped with McLaughlin’s force, the U.S. Marines that served with them had nothing but praise for their fighting abilities. Sergeant Dickerson said the British Marines “did their job very well. On the night of our capture, they fought just as well as any of the other men, and it was good to have them around.” Sergeant Morris L. Estess added that despite some problems in communications procedures between the units, everything went smoothly.

By dawn on the morning of 30 November, the situation had deteriorated as the Chinese pressed their attacks against the remnants of McLaughlin’s cut-off force. McLaughlin called a meeting of his surviving officers and staff non-commissioned officers to discuss the remaining options. As Sergeant Harrison recalled, there had been

an earlier attempt to break through enemy lines to gather more ammunition, although it became apparent to all that the situation was, indeed, desperate. Turned back by a Chinese roadblock, the two Marines sent to get ammunition brought back surrender terms instead, which had been issued by a Chinese officer. Major McLaughlin countered with a few of his own terms, as Sergeant Harrison later remembered:

The Major [McLaughlin] circulated amongst all of us and asked us how we felt about it. We were practically out of ammunition and casualties had been very high, and it looked pretty evident that we’d be completely annihilated when daylight came. I firmly believe that we would have. Well, the majority of the men, I believe, wanted to surrender. They thought that was about the only thing left. And so, the Major himself went back this time to the Chinese, but he didn’t agree to just unconditional surrender. He told them that we would stay and fight unless they agreed to take care of our wounded—that is, give them medical attention and return them to the nearest American CP. They agreed to do this. And then the Major came back and gave us the word that we were going to surrender.

During the ensuing negotiations with the Chinese, McLaughlin, accompanied by a Royal Marine, delayed the actual surrender to allow more men to either slip out of the perimeter undetected or for a relief force to batter its way through. His prolonged negotiations allowed more men to steal



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A5435

*In the breakout from Hagaru-ri to Koto-ri, Marines pass destroyed and abandoned equipment that littered Hell Fire Valley, the site of the ambush of Task Force Drysdale's column on 29 November.*

away while the enemy relaxed its vigilance. The largest of these groups came from the survivors of the three defensive perimeters established earlier on the afternoon of the 29th. They included soldiers from the 31st Infantry, U.S. Marines, and British Commando. Those unable to escape included 26 members of 41 Commando, who were taken prisoner.

As McLaughlin's men delayed the attacking Chinese, the remnants of Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale's column continued to fight its way through what Captain Sitter later estimated to be a regiment attached to the *60th CCF Division*. Due to the heavy enemy attacks, Drysdale was unaware the Chinese had cut off a major portion

of the convoy since there had always been gaps during the repeated stops and starts. He assumed the remainder of the column was not far behind the main body.

With the M-26 Pershing tanks of Company D and Antitank Company leading the way, Sitter and the rest of Company G, about a quarter of 41 Commando and elements of Company B, 31st Infantry, continued to blast their way toward Hagaru-ri under slackening enemy fire. A little more than a mile south of Hagaru-ri, the Chinese once again engaged the column with grenades and intense small arms and mortar fire from both sides of the road. In the battle that ensued, a satchel charge wounded Drysdale, who had

remained in the thick of the fighting. Sitter immediately took command of the force, reorganized it into a more defensible formation, and ordered the Marines, soldiers, and commandos to resume the advance.

As Task Force Drysdale advanced toward Hagaru-ri, which was now in view, the Chinese continued their attacks. In one of the last of these attacks, the assaulting enemy forces destroyed two trucks and inflicted several more casualties before the formation safely entered Hagaru-ri's defensive perimeter. At 1915, Sitter reported to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Ridge, his commanding officer, who directed that Company G and 41 Commando spend the night in perimeter reserve. Although



severely wounded, Drysdale also walked into the command tent and, after rendering a smart salute, reported to Ridge that "all Marines were present and accounted for."

Out of a force of 235 Royal Marine commandos that reported to Korea on 20 November 1950, there were initially no more than 63 present, although an additional force of 55 commandos that had been cut off in the rear along the route into Hell Fire Valley later entered Hagaru-ri in the early morning hours of 30 November. Led by Corporal Ernest Cruse of the Commando's heavy weapons group, the separated Royal Marines successfully fought their way through a host of Chinese soldiers to rejoin Drysdale's force. Another portion of the group, commanded by Lieutenant Peter R. Thomas, arrived later at Hagaru-ri with a 2 1/2 ton truck loaded with U.S. Marines, soldiers, and wounded commandos. Of the 900 men and 29 tanks attached to Task Force Drysdale that had set out from Koto-ri on the morning of 29 November, only about 400 troops and 16 tanks arrived at their objective the next morning. As for most of the troops, tanks, and trucks, in the rear of the column that had been cut off, they made it back to Koto-ri where they took part in that position's defense. Half of the task force's vehicles were destroyed by Chinese fire and littered the road from Koto-ri to Hagaru-ri.

The Royal Marines suffered 18 killed or missing and 43 wounded. Included among the dead were B troop commander Captain M. C. Parkinson-Cumine, medical officer/surgeon Lieutenant Douglas A. Knock, RN, and Petty Officer John A. Tate, RN, section commander of the fleet volunteers. Captain Leslie G. Marsh, D Troop commander, and the intelligence signals officer,

Lieutenant D. L. Goodchild, were both seriously wounded. Less than 100 of the original force of commandos made to Hagaru-ri without becoming a casualty. For 41 Commando, this was the end of the line as major land operations were concerned, as their ranks had been decimated in the drive to Hagaru-ri.

Despite the casualties, the arrival of additional combat troops at Hagaru-ri "represented a tremendous reinforcement" for the trapped U.S. Marines. General Smith was even more blunt in his comments:

The casualties of Task Force Drysdale were heavy, but by its partial success the Task Force made a significant contribution to the holding of Hagaru, which was vital to the Division. To the slender infantry garrison of Hagaru were added a tank company of about 100 men and some seasoned infantrymen. The approximately 300 troops, which returned to Koto-ri, participated thereafter in the defense of that perimeter.

The next day, Lieutenant Colonel Ridge ordered Company G to retake the crest of East Hill, holding the remaining members of 41 Commando in reserve. Drysdale and his officers spent much of 30 November reconnoitering possible counterattack routes and devising a defensive fire plan. The company-sized force of Royal Marines gave Ridge a potent, highly maneuverable element he could use in the defense of Hagaru-ri. When elements of the *20th CCF Army* bent back the flanks of Company G on East Hill, one platoon of B Troop, consisting of 32 Royal Marines and commanded by Lieutenant Gerald F. D.

Roberts, was sent out to counterattack. After a furious small arms firefight, the commandos dislodged the Chinese forces and eventually secured the flank. Captain Sitter earned the Congressional Medal of Honor during this engagement for his inspirational leadership and tactical abilities in repulsing the attacking Chinese forces. As his citation noted, Sitter, "at great risk to his own safety, visited every foxhole and gun position of Company G and its reinforcements, this despite the fact that he had been severely wounded in the face, arms, and chest by grenade fragments." Despite repeated attempts to evacuate him, Sitter insisted on remaining with his men throughout the night of 30 November.

While the rest of the Royal Marines remained in reserve, the attacking Chinese continued to harass the British and U.S. Marines on East Hill with sniper and small arms fire. The Marines replied with a heavy volume of return fire that soon silenced the enemy. Lost ground was eventually regained, and when Marine air came on station at 0900, the situation was under control. Sitter's skillful defense throughout 36 hours of continuous action assisted in temporarily breaking the back of the Chinese attacks around Hagaru-ri. The Chinese again attempted to seize the hill in the first week of December, but were beaten back in a major defeat.

### A Fighting Withdrawal and Reorganization

In reaction to the massive Chinese intervention, U.N. forces now faced what General MacArthur told Washington was "an entirely new war. Our present strength of force is not sufficient to meet this undeclared war by the

Chinese.” With the move to the defensive, General Smith’s only option was to fight his way out. The 5th and 7th Marines, then at Yudam-ni, were ordered south to Hagaru-ri.

It was cold and the wind was vicious on the morning of 6 December as the units at Hagaru-ri prepared to breakout southward. The 7th Marines took the lead, followed by the 5th Marines, with 41 Command and 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, attached. Before moving out on 7 December, Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale ordered a unit inspection. The officers moved up and down the rigid lines and reprimanded the men whose appearance and gear were not in the best possible shape. As Lieutenant Thomas later noted: “The Royal Marines custom of shaving daily despite the freezing weather had

been greeted initially with derision, but eventually the USMC conceded there was something in such outward signs of self discipline.”

The road was jammed with trucks, jeeps, and tanks; destroyed vehicles and battle debris were everywhere. The fighting intensified throughout the withdrawal, and as always, the Commandos put forth a valiant effort. Enroute, they retrieved the bodies of their slain comrades killed during the fighting in Hell Fire Valley, all of whom were buried in a mass grave at Koto-ri on 8 December. They were reunited along the way with Captain Patrick J. Ovens, 41 Commando’s assault engineer, who, along with 25 commandos attached to headquarters section, had managed to slip away during the surrender negotiations.

Despite repeated attacks from elements of an estimated seven Chinese divisions, it took the U.S. Marines, U.S. Army, and British Commando only 38 hours to move 10,000 troops and more than 1,000 vehicles the 10 miles to Koto-ri. There, General Smith assigned the Commando the task of holding the high ground overlooking the main supply route during the night to guard against infiltration by Chinese troops. On 9 December, in preparation for the withdrawal of the 1st Marines, the Commando relieved elements of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, on the Koto-ri perimeter. After beating back further CCF attacks, the Commando, along with the remaining elements of the division, set out for Hungnam, which they reached after marching another 23 miles in sub-zero

*U.S. and British Marines move down the mountain road from Koto-ri to Chinhung-ni, impeded only by icy conditions and small enemy groups who attempted to block the road by fire from both flanks.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A5409







Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A130437  
*U.S. Marine PFC Robert Harbula talks with wounded Royal Marine Sgt John W. Whiting, who awaits evacuation by planes of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing from Yonpo Airfield, south of Hungnam.*

weather. At Majon-Dong, the commandos mounted U.S. Army trucks, which ferried them down to the assembly area prepared at Hungnam. With elements of the 5th Marines, the commandos boarded the transport USS *General George M. Randall* (AP 115) and set sail for the port of Pusan. From there the commandos moved west to Masan, where they spent Christmas with the 1st Marine Division.

The Chosin Reservoir campaign ended the involvement of 41 Commando with the U.S. Marines, although it did not end their combat role in Korea. With the force now greatly reduced in strength, having suffered 93 casualties, the Commando returned to Camp McGill, Japan, where it refitted, took on new personnel, and resumed training as a raiding force. Once again, operational control of 41 Commando fell to Commander, Naval Forces, Far East.

Rested and re-equipped, 41 Commando resumed its role as a

raiding force. After a practice raid at Kure, Japan, a combined force of Commando, U.S. Navy UDT, and other support personnel, participated in a major raid aimed at the port city of Sorye-dong, 15 miles south of Songjin, with the support of two U.S. Navy destroyers, the heavy cruiser USS *St. Paul* (CA 73), and the aircraft carriers USS *Philippine Sea* (CV 47) and USS *Boxer* (CV 21). On 7 April 1951, 277 commandos, led by Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale, destroyed more than 100 feet of railroad embankment by creating craters 16 feet deep. Antipersonnel mines were then left in the area. The Sorye-dong raid was accomplished under the cover of aircraft from the two carriers and naval gunfire provided by the *St. Paul*. So complete was the surprise and so effective the shield of naval gunfire, the Commando suffered no casualties during the raid, which lasted approximately eight hours. Unfortunately, five villagers were killed

and 15 wounded by naval gunfire.

Periods of inactivity followed, during which future operations and a possible return to the 1st Marine Division were discussed. Then in July, C Troop left Japan as the advance party assigned to establish a forward operating base on the island of Yo-do in Wonsan harbor, more than 60 miles behind U.N. lines. The group also set up a rear base near Sasebo, Japan.

Wonsan harbor is a large bay guarded by two peninsulas. Inside and across the entrance are a number of islands, the largest being Yo-do. During the ongoing Operation War Dance, three destroyers circled within the bay seeking targets of opportunity. When 41 Commando arrived, Korean Marines and a number of intelligence gathering organizations garrisoned the islands. Here, the Commando ventured out on reconnaissance missions, oftentimes in two-man kayaks. Throughout the summer and early

*A Royal Marine searches a North Korean house for Communist soldiers during a raid to destroy enemy installations and supply lines near Songjin, where the main north-south railroad runs close to the sea.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428239







Sergeant Major James Day. On 27 September, Drysdale accompanied B Troop on board the transport *Wantuck* for yet another raid into the Songjin area. There, one party secured a road tunnel to attract enemy reaction while a second made a clandestine landing and ambushed the enemy reinforcements. This was the last time Drysdale led 41 Commando into combat.

On 3 October, D Troop, reinforced by assault engineers, UDT swimmers, and a rocket launcher team from B Troop, set out on board the transport *Wantuck* for operations south of Chongjin. After a night rehearsal on the 4th, the Commando attempted to launch the main mission. As the force approached the North Korean coastline, UDT swimmers discovered a much heavier enemy presence and the mission was scrubbed. On 15 October, Lieutenant Colonel Ferris N. Grant, a veteran of World War II and a graduate of the U.S. Marine Corps' Command and Staff School at Quantico, Virginia, relieved Drysdale and assumed command of 41 Commando.

While the primary purpose of the commando raids was to collect intelligence and harass enemy supply routes, the ever-present threat of a raid kept large bodies of enemy troops committed as security forces, thus denying their use elsewhere. In one major raid, on the night of 4 December, British commandos landed from the transport *Bass* and carried out attacks against enemy communications lines in Wonsan. Although they met some opposition, the commandos managed to damage railway tunnels and inflict a number of casualties. The enemy slightly wound several commandos before the Marines were withdrawn.

Other Royal Marines, attached

fall of 1951, the Commando, with its main base on Yo-do Island, conducted raids up and down the northeastern coast of the Korean peninsula, often landed from U.S. Navy high-speed transports.

In the process of carrying out these raids, the Commando occupied several more islands as patrol bases. Royal Marines from B Troop, commanded by Captain E. T. G. Shuldham, occupied Mo-do on 9 August, while commandos from D Troop, commanded by Captain Anthony Stoddart, seized Tae-do, near a former leper colony. In a separate but related action, D Troop commandos under the command of Lieutenant John R. H. Walter took the island of

Hwangto-do back after Communist forces overran the Korean Marine detachment there. On Hwangto-do, Royal Marines set up heavy 81mm mortars and a 75mm recoilless rifle to harass enemy positions and interdict enemy troop movements on the mainland. Other Royal Marines made six canoe landings on Hodo Pando. In one raid, on 30 August, enemy troops killed Lieutenant John Harwood and Sergeant Charles Barnes of B Troop in a daylong firefight. When the landing craft transporting B Troop ashore broke down off Mo-do on its way to another raid a few days later, the enemy managed to capture five commandos, including Troop

## 41 Commando Raiding Techniques

A part from the Soyre-Dong raid on 7 April 1951, all raids carried out by the British Royal Marine's 41 Independent Commando were clandestine operations conducted at night and were of two-troop-strength or less. Close approaches were made in rubber boats, later augmented by two-man kayaks. The U.S. Navy supplied the large rubber landing craft, which carried 10 men (coxswain, bowman, and eight paddlers) and up to 400 pounds of explosives packaged in 10-pound bricks. Parent ships, usually assault personnel destroyers (APDs), were ordered not to cross the 100-fathom line due to the threat posed by North Korean and Chinese Communist Forces use of a host of Soviet-supplied mines. Although the APDs often came as close as 70 fathoms, commandos still had to cover about eight miles to shore.

As the APDs closed on the coast to drop the commandos, dim red lights would be switched on in the troop spaces to aid night acclimatization. On "action stations" being sounded, the commandos would fall in at their boat stations. The four ramped landing craft would be lowered and troops would inflate their rubber boats, pass them down into the landing craft, and thence outboard into the water. Each rifle section would embark across the landing craft and the explosives would be handed down and stowed. As each rubber craft was loaded, it would be hooked to tow ropes and stream astern of its landing craft as the APD traveled at about one knot. When all was complete, with five or six rubber boats to each craft, the long tow in to the beach would begin. The landing craft, moving at three or four knots, would be vectored in by the APD, which would follow their progress on radar and pass course corrections over the radio.

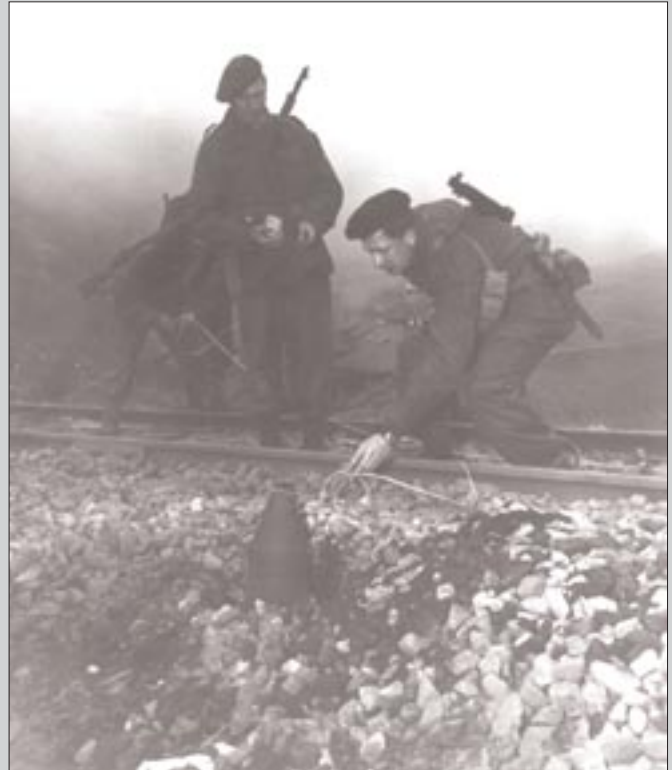
About 1,000 yards off the beach, the rubber boats would slip their tows and stand off while the reconnaissance boat, or canoe, closed the beach, sending swimmers in if necessary to check the surf and beach defenses. The covering force would then land, clear the beach area, and deploy to form a defensive perimeter around the objective.

Next to land would be the demolition and humping parties organized by the beachmaster. The assault engineers would lay the charges, which could take up to four hours. Each 10-pound pack had to be carefully laid and

connected in a ringmain with Cordtex so all detonated simultaneously. There had to be at least two methods of detonation and customarily several time clocks were used with a 20- to 40-minute setting.

When the assault engineers were ready, fuses were pulled and orders given to withdraw. The force would thin out, return to the beach, and re-embark under the directions of the beachmaster. Rubber boats would be launched and paddled out through the surf to pick up their tows. The waiting landing craft, which could have beached in an emergency to recover casualties or prisoners, would then begin the long haul back to the waiting APDs. As they cleared the area, the charges would detonate, giving the commandos a feeling of intense satisfaction at a job well done. Alongside, the rubber boats would be recovered, deflated, weapons inspected, and troops would go below. Even though officially "dry," U.S. Navy personnel would generously break out the medicinal brandy to help celebrate a successful operation.

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428241



to the West Coast Support Group, continued to maintain a tight blockade of sea communications. Here, Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, employed the British Commando in deception opera-

tions on numerous occasions. One of these operations took place on the west coast on 20 May 1951. The West Coast Commander, Admiral Alan K. Scott-Moncrieff, RN, commanded the operation

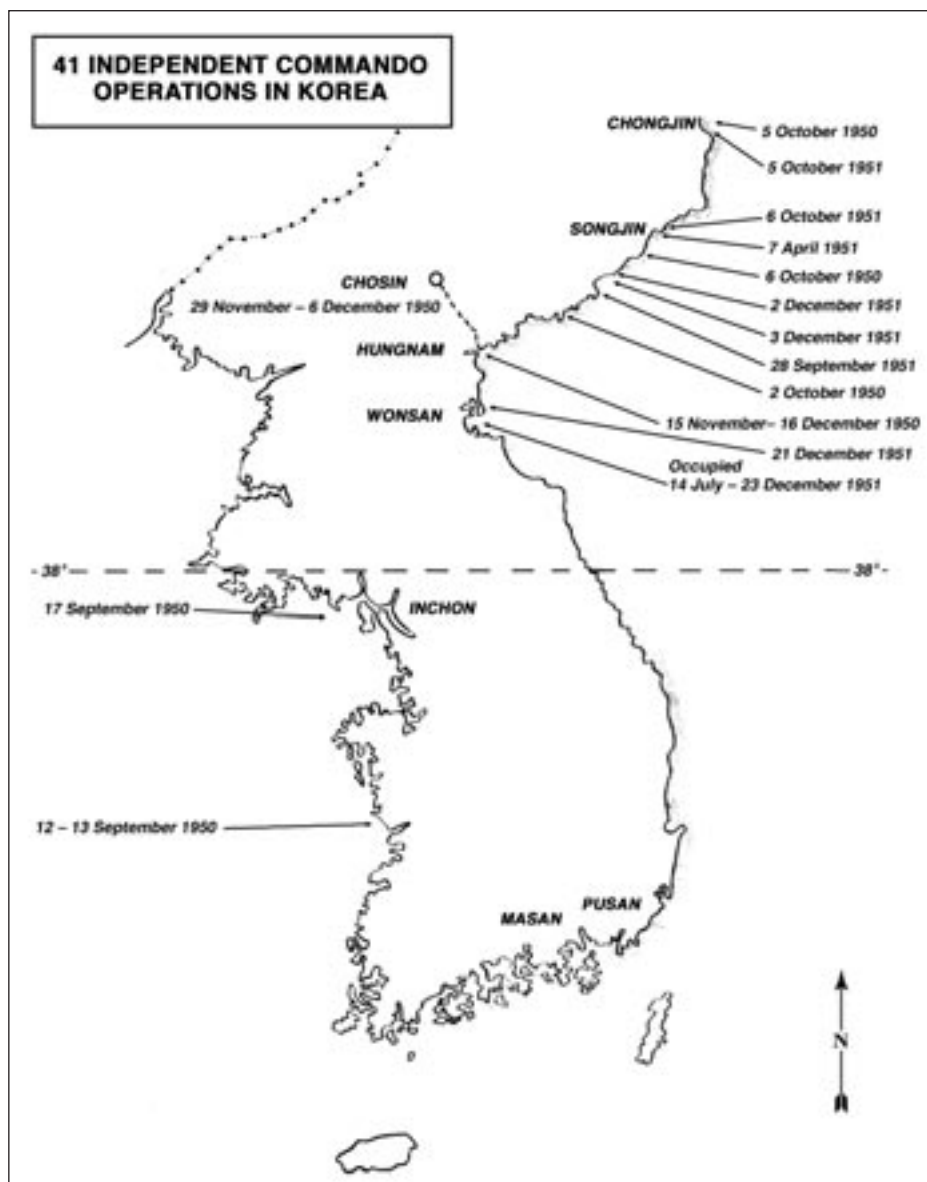
with naval gunfire support from the British ships HMS *Ceylon* and HMS *Kenya*. During the afternoon hours of that same day, Royal Navy ships lowered into the water a dozen landing craft, three loaded

with commandos, the others empty. The craft then proceeded to shore opposite Cho-do. The commandos remained ashore and conducted a small raid before re-embarking on board the waiting craft.

In their last raid of the war, dubbed Operation Swansong, British commandos, led by Lieutenant Walter and Troop Sergeant Major Roy R. Dodds of D Troop, raided enemy sampans in Wonsan Harbor, destroying many before retiring to the waiting transport *Bass*. Shortly after returning to their base in Sasebo, Japan, the Commander, Naval Forces, Far

East, acting on orders from Washington and London, replaced the Commando with a force of Korean Marines. Vice Admiral Joy, in a message to Lieutenant Colonel Grant and his men, emphasized the gratitude of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps with their 16 months of dedicated service to the United Nation's efforts in Korea:

It is with the greatest pleasure that I command the officers and men of the 41st Independent Royal Marine Commando. Your superb achievements have been a source of inspiration



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-438735  
*Royal Marine George Barnes poses on the deck of the Horace A. Bass in mid-December 1951 as the ship and 41 Commando team-up for the last time in an attempt to prevent any enemy movement by rail along the northeast coast of Korea.*

to freedom-loving people the world over and will go down in history's brightest page. You have contributed in no small measure toward arresting the forward momentum of the Communist threat to world peace. ... Since the inception of the 41st in August 1950, your courageous combat record against overwhelming odds in the many months of hard fighting has reflected the highest credit upon yourself and your brothers in arms in other branches of the U.N. forces in the field. On behalf of the naval forces in



the Far East, I extend most sincere appreciation for a job well done.

Those Royal Marines who had served less than a year overseas were transferred to 3 Commando Brigade in Malaya, while the remainder returned to the United Kingdom. In a formal ceremony at Stonehouse Barrack, Plymouth, on 22 February 1952, 41 Commando was disbanded. It was not until mid-1953 that the 19 surviving Royal Marine prisoners of war were repatriated. (One Marine refused repatriation and made propaganda broadcasts as a Communist sympathizer. He was officially discharged from the Corps as a deserter in January 1954. He returned to the United Kingdom in 1962. No action was taken against him). On 3 April 1957, in a private ceremony at the American ambassador's residence in London, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Randolph McCall Pate, presented to the Corps' Commandant General a Presidential Unit Citation, signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, officially recognizing 41 Commando for its actions during the Chosin Reservoir campaign. In addition to the unit citation and battle streamer, each surviving and deceased commando, or their family, received a service ribbon that denoted their participation in this legendary campaign.

The ties forged between the two Marine forces during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China grew stronger during their ordeal in Korea as they fought their way to the port of Hungnam during the cold, dark days of December 1950. The highest praise for 41 Commando came from General Smith, who in a letter of commendation to Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale, wrote:

The performance of the 41 Commando during their drive from Koto-ri to Hagaru-ri, during the defense of Hagaru-ri, and during the advance from Hagaru-ri to the south will, in the perspective of history, take equal rank with the past exploits of the Royal Marines. I can give you no higher compliment than to state your conduct and that of the officers and men under your command was worthy of the highest traditions of Marines.

The value of the raids conducted by the Royal Marines was questioned at the time and since. But eleven of the raids conducted by 41 Commando were directed against the enemy's major supply routes and caused him to divert manpower needed elsewhere to guard its coastal railway and supplies lines. Furthermore, the effect these raids had on the morale of both the Royal Marines, and more importantly the U.S. Marines, was considerable. As demonstrated during the Chosin Reservoir campaign, the presence and battlefield performance of the Royal Marines lifted the spirit of the U.S. Marines, as many in the 1st Marine Division felt they were the only "troops fighting this goddamn war."

As for casualties of 41 Commando, official reports stated the unit lost a total of 116 men during the course of its involvement in the war (August 1950-December 1951). The full impact of the losses is even more dramatic considering the figure constituted one-third of the original force of 300 Marines sent to Korea in August 1950. This high rate of casualties, however, did not diminish the fact that the Royal Marines made an important and lasting contribution to

the United Nations victory in Korea.

## Determined to Win: The Korean Marine Corps

On 15 April 1949, the ROK Marine Corps was activated at the Chinhae naval base on the south coast of the peninsula. The personnel, approximately 10 officers, 150 noncommissioned officers, and 300 privates, were drawn from the Korean navy—principally from among those ranks who had previous experience in the Japanese army or Japanese-sponsored Manchurian army. Included among the officers was the Corps' first Commandant, Shin Hyen Jun, a captain in the Korean navy who was made a colonel when he entered the new Marine Corps. In his first speech to his men, Colonel Shin outlined what became the underlying philosophy guiding the Korean Marine Corps (KMC): "let us overcome any difficulty before us, let us unite and let us train ourselves to become the strongest military unit to prepare for any national emergency." While he urged his officers and noncommissioned officers to take care and consideration when training their men, he nonetheless stressed they make a dedicated effort to train their Marines as elite troops so each Marine would "become a lion when we fight against our enemy."

At the time of its activation, the KMC consisted of two rifle companies and a headquarters company and was equipped with weapons of doubtful quality—mostly "hand-me-down" Japanese rifles with a few machine guns and other equipment. As Lieutenant General Kang Ki-Chun, who served as Commandant in the later half of the 1960s recalled: "it is beyond imagination to express the difficul-

## Lieutenant General Shin Hyen Jun

Lieutenant General Shin Hyen Jun had an impressive military career that began with the Japanese army, which occupied Manchuria from October 1937 to August 1944. There he served in a variety of military units and as an instructor in various Japanese-administered military schools. From August 1944 to the end of World War II in August 1945, Shin served as a company commander with the Japanese *Kwangtung Army* in Manchuria. From September 1945 to April 1946, the general served as a battalion commander with the Korean Liberation Army in the Peiping-Teintsin area. He returned home to Korea in June 1946, where he joined the newly-organized Republic of Korea Coast Guard, stationed at Chinhae. In August 1948, he was appointed a commander in the naval forces in the Republic of Korea Navy and participated in the campaign to quell an army rebellion at Yosoo in October 1948. Then Captain Shin Hyen Jun was transferred from the navy to establish the Republic of Korea Marine Corps on 15 April 1949, which is now the official birthday of the founding of this elite force of Marines.

The most pressing problems confronting Colonel Shin during those early days was obtaining equipment, locating a suitable base for the Korean Marines, and recruiting personnel. Shin's instructions to his men were simple: "act like sheep for our brethren, and become a lion when we fight against our enemy." Shin later recounted in his memoirs that "the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 solved these and other immediate problems."

During the Korean War, he participated in the Inchon landing on 15 September 1950, and in the subsequent allied drive to recapture Seoul. He likewise commanded all Korean Marine Corps elements from October 1950 to December 1950 in the Hamhung area during the massive counter guerrilla operation against rogue North Korean army elements. While Commandant, he visited Headquarters United States Marine Corps in December 1952 as a guest of the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. In addition to attending the Japanese Military Academy located at Mukden, Manchuria, Shin graduated from the Korean Marine's Command and General Staff College, located at Chinhae, and the U.S. Army's Command and General



Photo courtesy of the author

Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. After stepping down from the position as Commandant in October 1953, he remained in the service and organized and led the 1st Republic of Korea Marine Corps Infantry Brigade. He also served on the staff of the republic's joint chiefs and defense department before retiring on 4 July 1961. In addition to his military education, General Shin holds degrees from the University of Nevada at Reno (1962), and Yeonsie University, Seoul (1974). He currently lives in retirement in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

ties of its early beginning," as the force had to literally start from scratch, and in a sense "beg and borrow" equipment and facilities to begin training. The base selected for the KMC was a former Japanese airfield at Duk-San, Chinhae; its abandoned, rusting

aviation sheds served as the unit's first barracks.

Shortly after its formation, the KMC was reorganized as an infantry battalion with three rifle companies. With the addition of three more rifle companies comprised of 440 officers and men,

recruited primarily from the ROK Navy Recruit Depot's 14th class and formed on 26 August 1949, the now two-battalion Marine Corps began an intensive five-month training program. Initially, no U.S. Marine or Army advisors were assigned to the KMC. The

Marines were trained primarily in infantry tactics taken from Japanese army infantry training manuals, as many of the officers had served in the Japanese army during World War II.

### A Trained Counter-Guerrilla Force

In September, after the 1st, 2d, and 3d companies had been organized and trained, two companies were sent 40 miles west to Jinju to assist in counter-guerrilla operations in the nearby Chidee Mountain redoubt area. But the rugged mountainous region of southern Korea was not the only trouble area. In December, the KMC was transferred to the large island of Jeju-do off the southwest coast of Korea where the Communists were focusing efforts to take control. The Korean Marines fought several engagements with Communist guerrillas, and in cooperation with the local police, quelled a number of Communist-inspired riots among the resident population. Although some guerrillas were killed and others captured, these counter-guerrilla operations were not too successful. One Korean officer noted "the guerrillas were very adept at camouflage. They hid in holes in the ground, covered themselves with straw or other natural camouflage, while the guerrilla hunters swept over the top of them!" Despite the lack of success, the operations on Jeju-do endeared the KMC to the South Korean inhabitants. When war broke out in June 1950, many of the 3,000 South Koreans that rushed to join the Korean Marine Corps did so because of the publicity it received in its actions on Jeju-do.

As the KMC participated in the Jeju-do counter-guerrilla operations, and the subsequent internal

security operations, its ranks continued to grow, adding a 37mm antitank platoon.

### The Ghost Killers

In the pre-dawn hours of 25 June 1950, the NKPA invaded its southern neighbor and headed directly down the west coast toward the capital city of Seoul. The KMC was one of the first units thrown into the fight to stem the surge of enemy forces headed toward Seoul, Suwon, and Chunan. After NKPA forces seized Chunan, they pushed toward Kunsan north of Changhang by detouring along the western coastline. To delay the enemy forces, ROK army leaders sent one Marine unit, the Kokilhun unit, comprised of a solitary rifle battalion, to the area in July. After digging in, the

unit successfully withstood repeated enemy attacks, earning the reputation as "the marine unit who kills even ghosts." The Korean Marines, now expanded to three battalions and designated the 1st KMC Regiment, also took part in operations at Mokpo, Chang Hang, Chin-Jong-ri, Jinju, Nam-Won, Masan, and a landing operation on the Tong-Yong Peninsula.

On Tong-Yong, southwest of Pusan, the KMC conducted the first of several independent amphibious landing operations of the war to relieve pressure on South Korean and U.S. Army forces then engaged in the fighting around the Pusan perimeter. As one commentator later wrote, the landing at Tong-Yong: "deserves high admiration as it was regarded as the only attack operation for the defense of U.N. Forces in the

*Prior to the landing at Inchon, SSgt Jack F. Carns confers with South Korean Marine officers Lt Suk Hoojing (left), Lt Kim Hong Bai, and Capt Boo Eunseowg, on proper field procedures for military police.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A2160





midst of a withdrawal operation.” Due to the determined efforts of both the ROK army and KMC in the early days of the NKPA offensive, as well as the stiff defense put up by U.S. Army and Marine forces rushed to Korea in July and August, the enemy attack along the Pusan perimeter began to weaken. This determination was evident in the landing at Tong-Yong where, between 23 August and 15 September, Korean Marines under the leadership of Colonel (later lieutenant general) Kim Sung Un landed on Kueje Island and destroyed a NKPA force in a series of bitter exchanges.

On 5 September, in preparation for General Douglas MacArthur’s bold stroke at the port of Inchon, operational control of the 1st KMC Regiment passed to Major General Oliver P. Smith’s 1st Marine Division, and then to the 5th Marines. While waiting, Lieutenant Colonel Edward R. Hagenah, who had been assigned as liaison officer between the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the Korean Marines, made arrangements for additional weapons training on Korean Military Advisory Group ranges near Pusan. Training completed, the regiment, totaling approximately 120 officers and 2,600 enlisted, embarked on board the USS *Pickaway* (APA 222) at Pusan and on the 12th sailed for Inchon.

It was late on D-Day, 15 September, when the 1st KMC Regiment, assigned as division reserve, landed on Red Beach, and in place of the 17th ROK Regiment, began a mopping up campaign in the port city designed to clear out all bypassed enemy forces. Despite the lack of serviceable weapons and other types of military equipment, which were later supplied by the U.S. Eighth Army, Marines of the 1st KMC



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Nov 1950

*At Inchon, South Korean Marines board amphibious trucks furnished by the 5th Marines for transportation to the front, where they would join the U.S. Marine regiment in taking Kimpo Airfield.*

Regiment, under the command of Colonel Shin, successfully moved through Inchon in search of enemy forces that had hidden among its inhabitants following the landing of United Nations forces. To restore civil authority in the Korean port city as soon as possible, General Smith also tasked the regiment with screening the inhabitants to determine their loyalty to the republic. Once civil authority was restored, Admiral Sohn Won-Yil, the South Korean Chief of Naval Operations, and an honor guard of KMC and U.S. Marines participated in a brief ceremony marking the destruction of the NKPA and restoration of ROK authority. After completing the task at Inchon, the regiment, still under the operational control of the 5th Marines, participated in the drive to Seoul.

### Fight for Kimpo Airfield

On the evening of D+1, General Smith issued Operations Order 5-50, which directed the 1st and 5th Marines to drive along the Inchon-Seoul Highway toward Kimpo Airfield. Guarding the left flank of

the 5th Marines was Major Kim Yun Kun’s 3d KMC Battalion, which would attack north with the ultimate goal of gaining the high ground near Ascom City and west of the airfield. The 2d KMC Battalion, under Major Kim Jong Ki, would remain in Inchon on security duty.

At 0700 on the morning of 17 September, the regiment, less the 2d Battalion, passed through the lines of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and began to systematically clear the western outskirts of Ascom City before turning north toward Seoul, its ultimate objective. This expansive urban area proved to be a thorn in the side of Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray’s 5th Marines for the next 24 hours as elements of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, fought enemy troops through the maze of small buildings and thatched huts that had grown into almost two square miles of buildings, streets, and narrow alleys that characterized Ascom City. Originally built by the U.S. Army at the end of World War II, Ascom City proved to be an ideal place for the retreating NKPA to keep a large portion of U.S. and

South Korean Marines occupied in nasty urban fighting.

It took Captain Samuel Jaskilka's Company E, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, an entire morning to methodically eliminate all of the NKPA troops in its sector of Ascom City. In scenes reminiscent of the fighting in Naha on the island of Okinawa during World War II, the Marines had to enter every building to dislodge a determined enemy willing to fight to the death. While Jaskilka's Marines fought it out with the NKPA, the Marines of Company F, 2d Battalion, 5th

Marines, marched through the heart of Ascom City screening the remainder of the battalion's advance. Only one platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Titlon A. Anderson, reported everything quiet in his sector, although he asserted later that his men did not have time to check all the side streets and blocks of buildings bypassed by other units.

While 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, battled the NKPA along Ascom City's eastern outskirts, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, assisted the

Korean Marines on the other side of the city. Already in regimental reserve, Taplett's battalion had been assigned to occupy a series of assembly areas throughout the day and move forward in bounds behind the main assault elements. The morning's displacement into the western edge of Ascom City happened before the KMC attack had cleared the suburb as planned. Taplett committed his battalion against moderate resistance that had held up the South Korean Marines in their sweep through the town.

Swinging into action, Company G, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, quickly knocked out a NKPA machine gun emplacement in the city as patrols from the same company attacked a strong enemy troop concentration deployed among the buildings. The North Koreans fled after a furious firefight, and in the process left behind 18 confirmed killed at a cost of three Marines wounded. Meanwhile, Company I, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, had spread throughout the maze of streets and continued to engage a well-entrenched enemy. As 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, fought the enemy forces, the Korean Marines conducted a passage of lines and attacked NKPA forces north of the city.

After the 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, moved through Ascom City, the M-26 tanks, with Lieutenant Anderson's 1st Platoon riding shotgun, continued toward Kimpo Airfield, five miles away. Marines from 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, arrived at the outer perimeter of the airfield at 1600 that afternoon, and after fighting off a weak enemy counterattack of snipers and a squad of NKPA soldiers, Company D reached the main runway around 1800, where it was subsequently

*Col Shin Hyen Jun, commanding officer of the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment, visits the U.S. Navy command ship Mount McKinley (AGC 7) accompanied by his executive officer, interpreter, and senior U.S. Marine advisor, LtCol Edward R. Hagenab. An aide to Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General Thomas Holcomb, and a veteran of both theaters during World War II, LtCol Hagenab served as a Marine advisor until his death in December 1950.*

Gen Oliver P. Smith Collection, Gray Research Center



joined by the remaining elements of Lieutenant Colonel Murray's regiment.

Even as the Marines prepared to seize the airfield, the NKPA's *1st Air Force Division*, commanded by Brigadier General Wan Yong, prepared to launch a series of counterattacks against the Marines. The division, comprised mostly of support personnel, combat engineers, clerks, logisticians, and infantrymen, put up a stiff fight, and in the counterattacks, one of them at night, tried unsuccessfully to uproot the 5th Marines. The savagery of the fighting was evident in the fanaticism and casualties left behind by the NKPA when U.S. Marines decimated the motley mixture of poorly trained troops of *107th NKPA Regiment*, commanded by Colonel Han Choi Han, who fled the battle. In what became an indicator of the nature of the fighting the Marines would encounter in Korea, another NKPA regiment, the *877th Air Force Unit*, led by Major Kung Chan So, fought almost to the last man as Murray's Marines killed 395 of that unit's 400 soldiers. Also telling of the savagery of the fighting was another engagement, fought 18 September at 0300 when troops from General Wan's *1st Air Force Division* probed the Marine's lines. In repulsing the enemy probes, Sergeant Richard L. Marston jumped up in front of a squad of surprised enemy soldiers and shouted "United States Marines!" and opened fire with his M1 carbine. Supporting automatic rifle fire mowed down a dozen more enemy soldiers before they beat a hasty retreat. The result of Sergeant Marston's squad's night-time firefight was evident the next morning as sunrise revealed a pile of dead enemy bodies scattered in front of their position.

Eventually, the combined

Marine infantry, mortar, machine gun, artillery, and tank fire succeeded in breaking up repeated enemy attacks as both Marines and enemy soldiers fought, bled, and died in the savage fighting that was oftentimes hand-to-hand as Murray's 5th Marines clung to Kimpo Airfield that night and into the early morning hours. What became even more apparent to all in the battle for the airfield was that the fighting in Korea would be savage, and oftentimes to the death. No matter what job American or South Korean Marines performed, they would be called on to serve as infantrymen, either as individual riflemen or manning crew-served weapons. Such was the case of Sergeant David R. DeArmond, normally a bulldozer operator attached to the 1st Engineers, who died while operating a machine gun in the Kimpo perimeter. "Every Marine, a rifle-man" now took on a new, and permanent meaning.

Eventually, Murray's 5th Marines secured Kimpo Airfield with the 1st KMC Regiment providing security for its flanks. As Murray's forces prepared to move out to seize Seoul, the 1st and 3d KMC Battalions moved out on the 5th Marine's left to flush out enemy soldiers that had retreated to the Kimpo Peninsula. Eventually, the Korean Marines received assistance from the 17th ROK Regiment, which had landed at Inchon for counter-guerrilla duties.

### Battle for Seoul

In the late afternoon of 18 September, both X Corps and the 1st Marine Division issued orders for the crossing of the Han River, a move that signaled the beginning of the drive into the South Korean capital. In Division Operations Order 6-50, General Smith directed

Murray's 5th Marines to seize crossing sites along the north bank of the Han and prepare to cross the river while Colonel Puller's 1st Marines continued its attack toward Yungdung-po. The plan was to have the Marines envelop the enemy on the north bank of the river in the vicinity of Seoul and then, in a concerted drive, seize and secure the city and the high ground to the north. While the men of both the 5th and 1st Marines carried through with their crossings, the 2d KMC Battalion, mopping up operations in Inchon completed, advanced and occupied the high ground south of the Han River and provided flank security for the major crossing later that day. With the exception of the 1st Battalion, which met some opposition as it positioned itself to cross the river, the 5th Marines had no trouble on the 19th as it advanced to its assigned positions on the banks of the Han. Murray's Marines occupied all objectives against little or no opposition as the main body of the regiment prepared to cross the river.

General Smith directed the 5th Marines to "cross the Han in the vicinity of Haengju, seize Hill 125, and advance southeast along the railroad to the high ground dominating the Seoul highway." The units attached for the operation were the 2d KMC Battalion; the division Reconnaissance Company; Company A, 1st Tank Battalion; and the U.S. Army's Company A, 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion. In addition, Smith's orders instructed the 11th Marines to give the 5th Marines priority in artillery fires. In direct support of the main crossings were the 1st Engineer, 1st Shore Party, and 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalions.

As envisioned in the division operations order, the Reconnaissance





National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC348702

*South Korean Marines on board amphibious trucks move offensive against North Korean troops occupying Seoul, toward the Han River from Kimpo Airfield in support of the South Korea's capital city.*

sance Company was to lead the advance across the Han River by sending a swimming team across shortly after nightfall. If the swimmers found the bank clear of enemy activity, they would then signal the rest of the men to follow in tracked landing vehicles. Reconnaissance Marines would then seize the bridgehead formed by Hills 95, 125, and 51. After they secured these objectives, they would act as a covering force for Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, at 0400 that same morning. While the 5th Marines passed through the Reconnaissance Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, would follow in column at approximately 0600, with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines,

remaining in reserve until it also crossed with the 2d KMC Battalion protecting its left flank.

The crossing of the Han began on time, and while enemy fire proved difficult, Lieutenant Colonel Murray's Marines plowed across the river in amphibious tractors and quickly secured their assigned objectives. When it came time for the 2d KMC Battalion to cross, the amphibious trucks became bogged down along the south bank of the river. Lieutenant Colonel John H. Partridge, commanding officer of the 1st Engineers, and the KMC commander, Major Kim Jong Ki, decided the Korean Marines would cross the Han in amphibious tractors to save time and effort. They then

occupied the high ground to the north and northeast (Hill 95), guarding the crossing site. The rest of the regiment, less the 3d Battalion, which remained on security duty at Kimpo, followed.

By 20 September the Marines had established control over Kimpo Airfield. But persistent reports the NKPA planned to retake the airfield continued to circulate. At 0730 on the 21st, a report came to the commanding officer of the 3d KMC Battalion that warned of an attempted NKPA crossing of the Han River about seven miles north of the airfield. Major Kim Yum Kum called in air strikes, which dispersed the enemy force and broke up the attempt to launch a counterattack

against United Nations' positions at the airfield. At 1310, however, a U.S. Marine air liaison officer attached to the KMC battalion estimated that at least two NKPA battalions had positioned themselves in front of 3d KMC Battalion's positions. This report placed all units in the Kimpo area on full alert. While the attack never came, there was little doubt the NKPA could, if it desired, launch a counterstrike against U.S. and Korean Marines.

At Kimpo, both the American and South Korean Marines had the support of the 16-inch guns of the battleship USS *Missouri* (BB 63), and guns of the heavy cruisers USS *Toledo* (CA 133) and USS *Rochester* (CA 124) in defense of their perimeter. Naval gunfire was at its best in the Kimpo area, with both cruisers firing a total of 535 eight-inch shells from 21 to 24 September. In one action, Second

Lieutenant Joseph R. Wayerski, the shore fire control party officer attached to the 3d KMC Battalion, called in naval gunfire in support of a patrol-sized action by the battalion. With the support of naval gunfire, the Korean Marines wiped out a company-sized pocket of NKPA troops in the vicinity of Chongdong—about three miles northwest of the airfield on the south bank of the Han. In this engagement, the North Koreans lost an estimated 40 men killed with a further 150 taken prisoner. With the airfield fully secured, the 1st Marine Division continued the advance toward Seoul with elements of the 1st, 2d, and 3d KMC Battalions in direct support.

At 0700 on 22 September, the battle for northwest approaches to Seoul began in earnest. From north to south, the three assault battalions of the reinforced 5th

Marines were 3d Battalion, 5th Marines on the left, 1st KMC Battalion, commanded by Major Koh Kil Hun, in the center, and 1st Battalion, 5th Marines on the right. The 2d KMC Battalion remained in reserve. All three battalions jumped off from the high ground about three miles southeast of Haengju along a line bounded by Hill 216 to the north, Hill 104 in the center, and Hill 68 to the south. The Korean Marines had the unenviable task of assaulting these interlocking heights, used by the NKPA to provide fields of fire to move up in concealment and launch counterattacks along the 1st Marine Division's perimeter. Almost as soon as the 1st KMC Battalion's attack from Hill 104 began, it ran into stiff opposition as the enemy poured small arms and mortar fire, as well as punishing artillery fire on the South Koreans.

*Korean Marines conduct a search of a North Korean captive that was flushed from his nearby biding place during the allied drive toward Seoul. During that push, the Korean*

*Marines moved along the right (north) bank on the Han River in conjunction with the 5th Marines.*

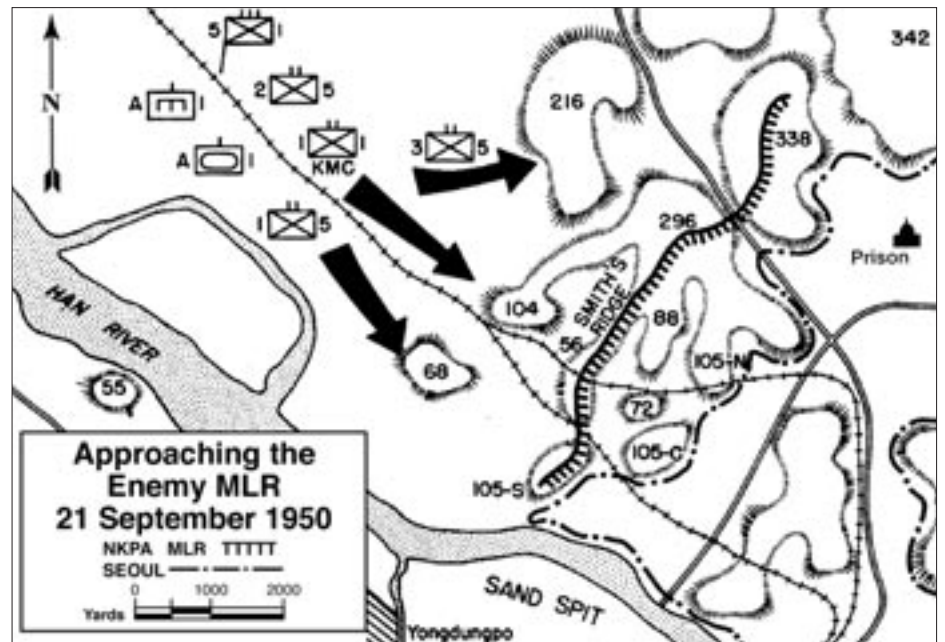
National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC349049





Even as the Korean Marines attacked, NKPA detachments continued to infiltrate into prepared defensive positions. Enemy fire held up both the 1st KMC Battalion and 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, until concentrated air and artillery strikes removed the stubborn defenders from the base of Hill 104. The fighting was so intense that even air strikes initially failed to dislodge the enemy. By nightfall on 22 September, the Korean Marines had been compelled to withdraw to Hill 104, their original starting point. Lieutenant Colonel Murray directed a rifle company from 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, to provide supporting fire the next morning from the adjacent summit of Hill 105-S when Major Koh's battalion renewed its attack in an effort to regain lost ground.

On the morning of 23 September, Murray directed the 1st KMC Battalion to attack from Hill 104 at 0700 in an attempt to straighten the line. The 1st and 3d Battalions, 5th Marines, were to remain in position and assist the advance by fire. The NKPA on Hill 56 greeted the renewed Korean Marine attack with heavy small arms and mortar fire. Although the Marines made a valiant effort, the smothering NKPA fire halted their attack dead in its tracks. Suffering heavy casualties (32 killed and 68 wounded), the South Korean Marine attack made little significant progress—the unit was spent. Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise, commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, conferred with Lieutenant Colonel Murray, who ordered his Marines to conduct a passage of lines through the KMC battalion and renew the attack on Hill 56. The 2d KMC Battalion was relieved from guarding the crossing site and assigned to screen the left [north] flank of the



5th Marines. Pulled back into division reserve, the 1st KMC Battalion reorganized and reentered the lines in support of Roise's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, which set out in bloody fashion to renew the assault. After a furious, daylong battle, Roise's Marines succeeded in breaking through the enemy's main line of resistance. As close air support strikes from Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Lischeid's Marine Fighter Squadron 214 broke up an enemy counterattack on nearby Hill 105-S, the weary Marines from both Lieutenant Colonel George R. Newton's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, and Roise's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, fought their way up both hills. Meanwhile, artillery fire from the 105mm and 155mm howitzers of the 11th Marines pounded enemy troop concentrations and kept the NKPA from attacking the dug-in Marines atop the two hills. With the enemy's position silenced, and the remainder of his rifle battalions across the Han River, General Smith ordered his Marines forward into the capital of Seoul.

As senior U.S. Marine advisor to the Korean Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Harrison, in

bluntly assessing the South Korean Marine assault from Hill 104, later wrote:

The Korean Marines were very valuable in mopping up, screening, and reconnaissance missions because of their familiarity with the terrain and the civilian population. Their limited training, almost complete lack of experience in the use of supporting arms, and the absence of certain tools, e.g., flamethrowers, 3.5-inch rocket launchers, etc., rendered them, however, incapable at that time of successfully assaulting a heavily defended position. Their failure here was a bitter pill to the Koreans, but it was only to be expected.

At 0700 on 25 September, the 1st Marine Division launched the final phase of its attack on Seoul. As outlined in the division Operations Order 11-50, the Korean Marines, in unison with their U.S. Marine counterparts, were assigned the mission of liberating the capital and clearing it of enemy forces. Major Kim Jong Ki's 2d Battalion,



attached to Regimental Combat Team 1 (1st Marines), was ordered to seize the part of Seoul within zone of action and the high ground beyond the northeastern outskirts of the capital, about six miles from its original jump off positions. As outlined in that order, the zone of action, which ranged from one to one-and-a-half miles wide, carried the attack through the heart of the city, with South Mountain on the right and Ducksoo Palace on the left. In addition to acting as flank security, the battalion was assigned mopping up operations once the capital was secured. At the conclusion of the operation, the 2d Battalion was to revert to its own regimental control.

Major Koh's 1st KMC Battalion, attached to Regimental Combat Team 5 (5th Marines), and the division's reconnaissance company, was to seize the part of Seoul within its zone of action

and the high ground overlooking the Seoul-Uijongbu road six miles from the line of departure. About one-and-a-half miles wide, this zone included the northwest section of the city and the Government Palace. Like the 2d Battalion, Koh's battalion would then mop up any lingering resistance. The remaining units of the regiment (less 1st and 2d Battalions) were designated as the division reserve. The regiment was to be prepared to reassume control of its detached battalions and then occupy Seoul.

As the 5th Marines moved out to attack the NKPA, elements of Lieutenant Colonel Newton's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, along with the division's reconnaissance company and 1st KMC Battalion, acted as a blocking force designed to prevent the NKPA from reinforcing its tenuous positions on Hills 338, 216, and 296. Most heavy fighting on the 25th

took place within the 1st Marines zone of action. As the morning of 26 September dawned, the NKPA remained entrenched in Seoul, determined to fight to the death for every inch of the city, even though X Corps had proclaimed the capital taken. Division Operations Order 12-50, issued at 1230, directed a continuation of the attack and committed Colonel Homer L. Litzenberg, Jr.'s 7th Marines. Litzenberg's regiment, augmented by the newly organized 5th Separate KMC Battalion, was given the mission of "pinching out" the 5th Marines beyond the Government Palace and attacking abreast of the 1st Marines toward the northeast. (On 25 September, the 5th Battalion, in addition to the 26th Company, landed at Inchon and moved up by truck to the regimental assembly area in the southern part of Seoul.) In the 7th Marines zone of advance north of the city lay the northern half of Hill 338, Hill 342, Hill 133, Hill 343, and Hill 171, some of the toughest real estate yet encountered by both the U.S. and Korean Marines as they pushed forward to liberate the capital. Colonel Lewis B. Puller's 1st Marines, with the 2d KMC Battalion, was to drive northward from Hills 97 and 82 in lower Seoul, clear the center of enemy forces, then wheel to the right to take Hill 133 in the northeastern outskirts.

The 5th Marines, with the 1st KMC Battalion attached, was assigned to support Colonel Litzenberg's attack until the two forces converged to allow Murray's regiment to reassemble in division reserve and gradually relieve elements of the 7th Marines. The 1st KMC Regiment was still under orders to resume control of its detached battalions for the occupation of Seoul. With X Corps now ashore and opera-

*U.S. Navy Corpsman Wendal D. Lewark treats a wounded South Korean Marine as another looks on at an aid station in Seoul. During the battle for the capital, Korean Marine losses were more than 50 killed and 100 wounded.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-420501



tional, the 3d KMC Battalion was detached from the 1st Marine Division and assigned to the U.S. Army's 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team for operations in the Kimpo Peninsula. There, the 3d Battalion undertook counter-guerilla operations to clear out the remaining pockets of enemy stragglers that posed a security threat.

Meanwhile, the 1st KMC Battalion moved into position between the division's Reconnaissance Company and 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, which had established itself on Hill 296. In the final battle for Seoul, as the U.S. Marines fought their way through the rubble, Korean Marine and army elements continued to neutralize pockets of stubborn enemy resistance. By 1630 on 28 September, the remaining elements of the NKPA in Seoul had either been annihilated or had abandoned the city and headed north toward the 38th Parallel, returning along the same route they used into the city only two months before.

On the morning of 29 September, while the battle still raged in the suburbs, the legal government of Korea was reinstated in a ceremony held in Changdok Palace. Outside the palace and along the route taken by General Douglas MacArthur and Korean President Syngman Rhee from Kimpo Airfield across the Han River to the capitol building, a Korean Marine or soldier with fixed bayonet stood guard every few paces. As an additional precaution, a second line of security manned by U.S. Marines was established a block or two on either side of the ceremonial route and on the high ground outside the palace.

Instead of taking over security responsibility for the capital, the 1st KMC Regiment (less the 1st and

3d Battalions) was directed to advance about 18 miles east of Seoul and establish blocking positions near the junction of the Han and North Han Rivers. An important road from the south crossed the North Han at this point, and it was thought the enemy retreating from the south might use this route. The Korean Marines met only scattered resistance.

On 6 October, X Corps directed Major Kim Yun Kun's 3d KMC Battalion to conduct a reconnaissance in force on Kang Wha Island to "ferret out any remaining Commies." Kang Wha lies a little less than a mile off the northwest tip of Kimpo Peninsula, and it was here that Captain McLane Tilton and his Asiatic Fleet Marines stormed ashore in 1871 and captured the Korean forts guarding the Han River approaches to the capital. However, the operation was cancelled and the 3d Battalion was directed to join the rest of the regiment in an assembly area near Incheon.

The Korean Marines' role in the fight from Incheon to Seoul was instrumental in the overall victory achieved by United Nations forces. And that victory deserved a little celebration, as Lieutenant Colonel Harrison later recalled:

On 10 October a parade of the 1st KMC Reg[imen]t with all four battalions was held at an athletic field in Incheon. Generals Smith and [Edward A.] Craig, together with the senior officers of the Division staff and regimental commanders, attended. General Smith trooped the line and then took the march past from a hastily constructed reviewing stand on the side of the field. The Korean Marines not only produced a band but also a set of U.S. Colors manufactured



Photo: "A Marines Matches Thousands of Enemies"  
*TSgt Yang Byung Soo and Pvt Choi Kuk Bang hoist the Republic of Korea's national colors at the capitol building in Seoul.*

by themselves. For an organization which was so young, and which had just completed a rigorous campaign, their performance and appearance was quite commendable. After the review the Korean officers and their American guests repaired to the large school building nearby where they were treated to beer and cocktails by the young ladies of Incheon who had dug out their best silk finery for the occasion. ... It was a pleasant diversion from the grueling tasks of the past fortnight.

The Incheon-Seoul campaign was over, and the 1st KMC Regiment focused its efforts on preparing for the next—the drive north across the 38th Parallel.



Photo: 1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Oct 1950

On 10 October, as U.S. Marine Gens Oliver P. Smith and Edward A. Craig stood by with senior officers of the division staff and regimental commanders, Korean Marines held a victory celebration and formal parade at Inchon following the Seoul campaign.

### Beyond the 38th Parallel

Still clad in summer utilities and light rubber shoes, the Korean Marines, with the assistance of their U.S. Marine liaison officers and advisors, attempted to secure winter clothing during the short break in combat at Inchon. Winters, everyone knew, could get “mighty cold in North Korea.” The 3d Battalion, for example, managed to get sufficient gear from the 1st Marine Division to give each Korean a pair of woolen trousers, two blankets, a wool scarf, and a couple of pairs of socks, but no wool shirts, overcoats, or leather shoes.

On 18 October, three of the KMC battalions embarked on landing ships for the port of Wonsan.

Plans for the Wonsan operation generally followed the same scheme employed during the Inchon-Seoul campaign—a Korean battalion would be parceled out to the U.S. Marine infantry regiments. Having decided the regimental headquarters would have no real role to play and would be a useless appendage, Colonel Shin and his staff did not accompany his battalions by ship, but arrived later by air.

After several days of steaming back and forth off the east coast of Korea between Pusan and Wonsan, mine sweepers finally cleared lanes for the landing ships to drop anchor. But as one Marine advisor remembered, “both the Korean army moving rapidly up the east coast on Shank’s mare and

the USO troupe with Bob Hope and curvaceous Marilyn Maxwell had beaten us to the objective.”

Landing in late October, the KMC battalions, still under operational control of the 1st Marine Division, were assigned the on-call mission of securing and maintaining the main supply route in the Muchon-Wonsan-Kojo-Majon-ni area. There was little to do until early November when the southern boundary of X Corps was moved farther south and the U.S. Marines were ordered north in the advance toward the northern border of Korea. On 2 November, the battalions, now detached from the 1st Marine Division, were given responsibility for the zone south of the 39th Parallel, which they would assume over the next sever-



al days. The relief of 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, for example, was completed by Korean Marines that same day at Anbyon, eight miles southeast of Wonsan, freeing the U.S. Marine unit to rejoin its regiment that was moving north.

On 10 November, Major Kim Yun Kun's battalion was rushed to reinforce two squads of Marines of Second Lieutenant Ronald A. Mason's 2d Platoon, Company H, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, at Majon-ni. Those Marines were threatened with encirclement by remnants of the *45th NKPA Regiment, 15th NKPA Division*. In the fight that ensued during the night and early morning of 11-12 November, Lieutenant Mason's Marines and Major Kun's battalion repulsed several determined, although futile, attacks by the enemy force. By 0600, what remained of the enemy regiment beat a hasty retreat as it aban-

doned the attack on Majon-ni and shifted its focus to guerrilla warfare in the Imjin Valley. The relief of the Marines and KMC battalion at Majon-ni began the next afternoon as elements of the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division, arrived to take over the perimeter. With the movement of the 1st Marines northward, X Corps attached the 3d and 5th KMC Battalions to the army unit and directed the two battalions to assume responsibility for a zone to the south and west of Kojo. (The Chinese character for "4th" is the same as for "death," hence no 4th Battalion. Different logic was applied, however, in numbering companies, thus no objection to a 4th company in the 1st Battalion.) The 2d KMC Battalion, which had been detached to conduct counter-guerrilla operations in the Mokpo area of southwest Korea, rejoined the



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A4436  
*A South Korean Marine, who fought with American Marines at Inchon and Seoul and accompanied them into northeast Korea, interviews civilians at a checkpoint near Wonsan in an effort to restore order.*

*BGen Shin Hyen Jun meets with MajGen Oliver P. Smith on board the Mount McKinley. As Shin had been just promoted, MajGen Smith "dug up a couple of spare stars and pinned them on him." Here, Gen Shin is flanked on his right by Capt Martin J. Sexton, aide to MajGen Smith, and BGen Shin's interpreter, and on the left by his executive officer.*

Gen Oliver P. Smith Collection, Gray Research Center



other two battalions in late November.

As Chinese Communist forces continued to push south from the Yalu River and the 1st Marine Division fought its way from the Chosin Reservoir to the coast in early December, the Korean Marines, still attached to the 3d Infantry Division, moved to Wonsan where they assisted in defending the harbor and ensuring the safe evacuation of allied troops and Korean refugees. On 7 and 9 December, after covering the removal of Marine Aircraft Group 12's equipment, the U.S. Navy withdrew the 1st and 3d KMC Battalions by landing ship and transported them to Pusan. Even as they withdrew, their performance in the defense of Wonsan was "outstanding." Six days later, the U.S. Air Force's Combat Cargo Transport Command moved the 2d and 5th KMC Battalions at Hamhung. In mid-December, the regimental headquarters and all four battalions were reunited at

the Chinhae naval base on the south coast of Korea.

## Reorganization and Refitting

At Chinhae, the 1st KMC Regiment underwent a period of rest, rehabilitation, training, and reorganization. During this time, the first substantial number of U.S. Marine Corps liaison teams joined the Korean Marine Corps as advisors. The first such assignment occurred prior to the Inchon-Seoul operation. This team consisted of Lieutenant Colonel Edward Hagenah, who was the acting liaison officer, three corporals, who were radio operators, and one corporal who drove a jeep mounted with a built-in radio. This arrangement lasted throughout the Inchon-Seoul campaign. At the conclusion of the campaign and upon the recommendation of the liaison officer attached to the first team, its numbers were temporarily expanded to include a senior advisor (a lieutenant colonel); battalion liaison officers (lieutenants); S-1 (personnel) and S-4 (supply, a major or captain); bulldozer operators (corporals or privates first class); and jeep drivers (corporals or private first class). While the number of liaison personnel still proved to be inadequate to deal with the multitude of organizational and logistics problems associated with the original composition of the regiment, the liaison group nonetheless remained intact until late December when the Korean Marines returned to Chinhae and the group was disbanded.

In mid-January 1951, the 1st KMC Regiment was re-attached to the 1st Marine Division and Colonel Shin requested through the senior U.S. Marine advisor that, if and when a liaison team returned to the KMCs, it be enlarged to include an intelligence

officer, operations officer, four liaison officers, communications officer, medical officer, clerk typists, intelligence clerk, supply clerk, two navy corpsmen, ambulance driver, and four drivers/mechanics (one for each battalion). Unfortunately, when U.S. Marine advisors returned to the regiment, the team's composition remained about the same as before. This remained the case until the 1st Marine Division established a full-time U.S. Marine Provisional Liaison Team, which gradually increased as the Korean Marine Corps undertook more of the fighting from mid-1951 through the end of the war in July 1953.

While the majority of the work done by the U.S. Marine advisory teams took place behind the lines, it often involved being on the frontlines and in the line of fire. In some cases, enemy fire wounded or killed an advisor. In one such instance around the "Punchbowl" on 31 August 1951, an enemy mine severely wounded Colonel Kim Tae Shik, 1st KMC Regiment's commanding officer, and U.S. Marine advisor Second Lieutenant James F. McGoey, as both men returned from an inspection tour of the frontline companies.

Despite the ever-present dangers of the battlefield, the advisors working with the Korean Marines were enthusiastic and patient as they instructed their South Korean counterparts in the intricacies of logistical support of a battalion in the attack, fire support, and administrative matters. Colonel Kim made special note of one Marine advisor, a Major Jennings, USMCR, who remained with the Korean Marines for almost a year. As Colonel Kim stated: "Jennings was a real go-getter and was a great help to him in his logistical duties."

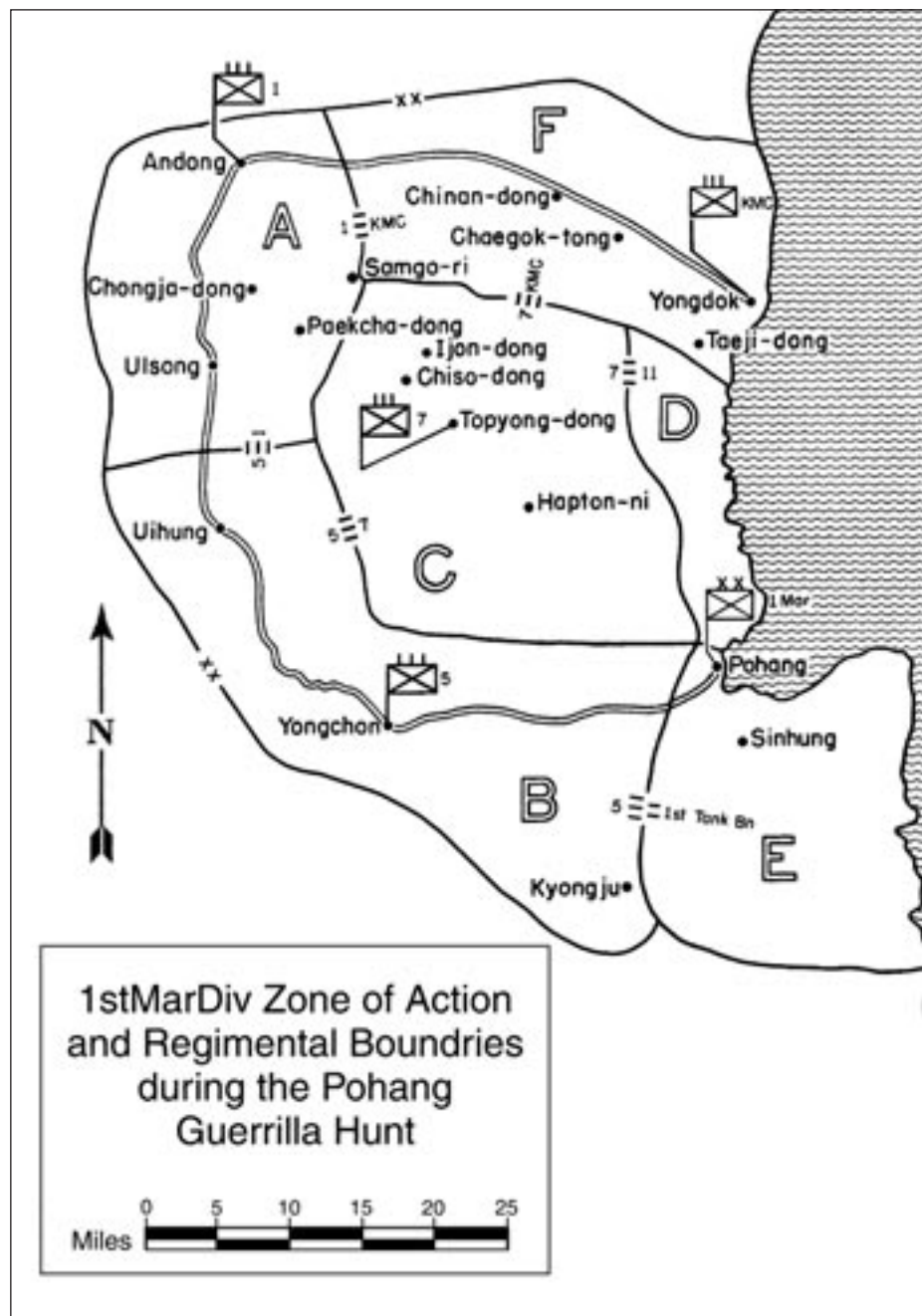
To work with the Korean

Marines, each U.S. Marine advisor needed a working knowledge of Japanese because of its common usage, be mature, and above all else, be patient, as well as being technically and tactically knowledgeable in his particular military specialty. Prior to their assignment, advisors were instructed to be "respectful and understanding," as well as to avoid "talking down to" their South Korean counterparts. They were to "advise" or "recommend" and not "order" their Korean allies to take a particular course of action. Lastly, Marine officers and noncommissioned officers assigned to advisory duty were to be mindful of the cultural setting in which they would be working. They were not to expect that "this was the way it was done at Quantico or Parris Island," and they were to avoid involving themselves in matters beyond their advisory mission. For the most part, the advisory effort worked very well.

## The Force Matures

Rested and refitted, the 1st KMC Regiment once again entered the line on 24 January in the Andong-Tongduk area, northwest of Pohang. As General Kang later noted: "the purpose of this move was to engage and defeat the *10th NKPA Division*, which had infiltrated the main line of resistance by moving along the Taibaek Mountain Range." To stabilize the rear area behind the lines of the U.S. Eighth Army and root out this enemy, the 1st KMC Regiment and the 1st Marine Division conducted a massive counter-guerrilla campaign.

With Lieutenant Colonel Harrison and a group of division liaison and advisory officers along as observers, the four battalions of the 1st KMC Regiment moved out



from Chinhae by landing ship and truck. On 26 January, Operations Order 4-51 assigned to the Korean Marines Sector F astride the Yongdok-Andong highway, which had been carved out of Sectors C and D held by the 7th and 11th Marines respectively. They were to conduct daily patrols from positions near Yongdok, Chaegok-tong, and Chinan-dong, preventing the enemy from penetrating their sector.

The regiment opened its com-

mand post at Yongdok on 29 January. The first operations order issued divided Sector F into three parts, assigning the western, central, and eastern sub-sectors to the 3d, 1st, and 2d Battalions respectively. The 5th Battalion, meanwhile, was assigned to the 1st Marines, which was patrolling in the Andong area.

The first days of February saw continuous action by the U.S. and South Korean Marines as both forces sought to "snuff out" the remnants of the NKPA's 10th

*Division*. With reports that portions of the NKPA's 25th and 27th Regiments were fleeing toward the zone of the 5th Marines, Korean and U.S. Marines prepared to launch a "knock out blow" against the retreating enemy, who anticipated the attack and shifted their retreat northward toward Topyong-dong. There, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Marines, planted a well-laid trap as they closed in from one side while the 1st and 3d KMC Battalions blocked the roads in the vicinity of Samgo-ri and Paekcha-dong. Elements of the two enemy regiments were forced to break into small groups and scatter to avoid utter destruction by the desultory fire of the U.S. and South Korean Marines.

The nearest the NKPA came to success occurred on 5 February, after the 1st and 2d KMC Battalions had established zone blocking positions at the request of the 7th Marines, which had been relentlessly pursuing the shattered enemy forces. In a sharp firefight, a platoon from Lieutenant Colonel Ryen Bong Seng's 2d KMC Battalion stumbled into a well-prepared NKPA defensive position equipped with 81mm mortars and heavy and light machine guns a few miles southwest of Yongdok. In the exchange that followed, the NKPA forced the Korean Marines to withdraw with a loss of 1 killed, 8 wounded, and 24 missing, in addition to the loss of small arms and other equipment. However, by evening all of the missing had been located. This would be the only success the NKPA achieved during the Pohang counter-guerrilla campaign.

In a follow-on assault, the battalion avenged the previous day's actions as it succeeded in taking the same position. In a sign of the ever-increasing sophistication, Lieutenant Colonel Ryen skillfully



called in close air support from Marine aircraft of Marine Night Fighter Squadron 513, which bombed and rocketed the NKPA's positions. Once again the NKPA fled. The presence of the aircraft was a great boost to Korean morale.

During the short sojourn near Pohang, the regiment was a logistical beggar. While the regiment was supposed to be supplied and equipped by the ROK army or the Eighth Army, the 1st Marine Division "furnished what items of equipment and supplies we could." In the case of food, the ROK army quartermaster supplied only rice. The regimental commander was given an allotment of about 250 won per day to buy what was known in Korea as side

dishes, e.g., eggs, fruit, meat, kimchi, and vegetables. There were two things wrong with this system: first, the troops had already eaten the country bare and there was almost nothing to buy; and second, rampant inflation had priced food out of the range of the regimental purse. Much later, the army quartermaster began issuing food for side dishes.

On 12 February, the regiment (less the 5th Battalion) received orders to prepare for its movement by landing ship to Samchok, up the coast near the 38th Parallel, where it would be attached to the South Korean army's Capital Division. Arriving on the 15th, the regiment went into division reserve. During the period of its attachment, the Korean Marines

engaged in some fairly heavy fighting and contributed considerably in preventing the collapse of the eastern end of the United Nation's defensive line. It was at such places as Yungil, Hongchon, Hwachon, Dosolsan, Daewusan, Kimilsung Hill, Motaekdong Hill, and Wolsan Pass that the Korean Marines earned the reputation that "when there is a Marine, there is no enemy before them."

Meanwhile, the 5th Separate KMC Battalion took part in a secondary landing at Inchon on 16 February and reported to the Eighth Army's 2d Logistical Command, while other United Nations forces reoccupied Seoul in the wake of the retreat of the CCF and NKPA from the South Korean capital. The battalion subsequently

*On the morning of 24 February 1951, an unopposed landing by 110 South Korean Marines on the island of Sin-do followed two hours of bombardment. United Nations forces*

*now held a strategic island north of the 38th Parallel in Wonsan harbor.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-427265



was used to man defensive positions on the Kimpo Peninsula and did not rejoin the regiment until the 1st Marine Division moved west in March 1952.

### 1st KMC Regiment Returns to the Front

Even as the 1st KMC Regiment was transferred yet again to another command, Rear Admiral Sohn Won-Yil, Republic of Korea Chief of Naval Operations, requested on 21 February of General Matthew B. Ridgway, Commanding General, U.S. Eighth Army, that to prevent the frequent shifting of the regiment or any of its attached units between other units, it be permanently attached to the 1st Marine Division. General Ridgway approved Admiral Sohn's request, and from 17 March 1951 until the armistice, the KMC remained under the tactical control of the 1st Marine Division. However, Eighth Army turned down Colonel Shin's request to regain control of the 5th KMC Battalion. Eighth Army's approval to permanently attach the 1st KMC Regiment to the 1st Marine Division came as the Korean War settled down into positional warfare along the 38th Parallel on the main line of resistance, and the assumption by the division of a sector of responsibility after being placed under operational control of X Corps, then IX Corps, and finally I Corps. It was at this time that Lieutenant Colonel Harrison was directed to reorganize and reassemble a KMC liaison group.

To provide the 1st KMC Regiment with direct artillery support, division headquarters assigned the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William McReynolds, the task. When the advance resumed in what Eighth Army



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A157570

*South Korean Marines employed all available weapons in the attack on Hill 975, including the 81mm mortar. Their success in forcing the enemy to withdraw from the strategic Kari-san massif "raised their stock considerably with the 1st Marine Division."*

dubbed Operation Ripper, the KMC occupied the center of the front and attacked between the 1st Marines on the right and the 5th Marines on the left.

The zone of the 1st KMC Regiment, now under the command of Colonel Kim Sung Un, was a wilderness without roads, making it necessary to airdrop ammunition and supplies for the attack on Hill 975. (The reason often given for the assignment of the Korean Marines to the sector with the roughest terrain was that Koreans were better "mountain goats" than the U.S. Marines, and that the Koreans had no experience operating with tanks.) This turned out to be the hardest fight of

the division's advance as it moved toward Cairo Line. McReynolds' battalion provided excellent artillery support for the 2d and 3d KMC Battalions as they inched their way forward in three days of bitter combat. Not until the morning of 24 March was the issue decided by maneuver when the 1st Battalion moved around the left KMC flank into a position threatening the enemy's right. Resistance slackened on Hill 975 and the South Korean Marines took their objective without further trouble.

The 1st and 5th Marines were already on Cairo Line, having met comparatively light opposition from NKPA troops who had

relieved the *66th* and *39th CCF Armies*. The enemy was apparently using the NKPA as an expendable delaying force while massing in the rear for an offensive that could be expected at any time. Even as Eighth Army had achieved all of the objectives set forth in Operation Ripper, General Ridgway planned to continue the offensive to keep the enemy off balance by applying as much pressure as possible, thus denying any respite to regroup and counterattack. In short, Ridgway wanted to maintain momentum and ordered the Eighth Army forward with little pause or interruption.

On 26 March, in keeping with this strategy, IX Corps ordered the 1st Marine Division to a new Cairo Line. This was simply a northeast extension of the old line to the boundary between IX and X Corps. While the 5th Marines maintained their positions, the 1st Marines and the 1st KMC Regiment moved up to the new line on schedule and without opposition. During the last weeks of Operation Ripper, Eighth Army units, which included U.S. and South Korean Marines, gained about 35 miles of additional frontage as they drove toward the 38th Parallel. On the 29th, General Ridgway published a plan for Operation Rugged, a continuation of Ripper aimed at achieving Kansas Line, the new objective. While the bulk of the 1st Marine Division was to be relieved by X Corps elements, the 7th Marines was to move up from reserve near Hongchon and join the 1st Cavalry Division in an attack aimed at Chunchon to drive the remaining enemy out of the area.

But instead of being relieved, General Ridgway ordered the 1st Marine Division to continue the advance with two infantry regiments as well the 1st KMC

Regiment. The 1st Marine Division's new mission called for the relief of the 1st Cavalry Division (with the 7th Marines attached) north of Chunchon. This gave General Smith's 1st Marine Division the responsibility for nearly 20 miles of front.

### Back Across the 38th Parallel

Further IX Corps instructions directed the 1st Marines into division reserve near Hongchon while the 5th Marines and 1st KMC Regiment attacked. After fording the Soyang River, the 5th Marines and the 1st KMC Regiment reached their objectives with only light enemy opposition. On 4 April, the Marines and their South Korean counterparts were among the first Eighth Army troops to recross the 38th Parallel. The following day marked an important event in Korean Marine Corps history when 10 officers and 75 men joined 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, for a month of on-the-job training in field artillery. "Korean officers were rotated through all the jobs peculiar to artillery," noted Lieutenant Colonel Harrison. During the cycle, the enlisted men were trained as cannoneers, fire direction control operators, communicators, and motor transport mechanics. This was the beginning of what later grew into a KMC artillery regiment.

Meanwhile, General Ridgway issued yet another operational order, which designated new objectives for the Eighth Army to the north. The purpose of this new offensive was to put pressure on expected Chinese preparations for a spring offensive behind the so-called "Iron Triangle." While aerial bombardment could hamper this CCF build up somewhat, General Ridgway correctly surmised that only with the use of ground forces

could the CCF be brought to battle. On 8 April, in preparation for this new offensive, the 1st Marine Division, along with the 1st KMC Regiment, relieved the 1st Cavalry Division on Kansas Line and prepared to renew the offensive with an attack toward Quantico Line near Hwachon. The 1st and 2d Battalions took positions generally along Kansas Line, while the 3d Battalion prepared the regimental reserve position on a ridgeline to the rear. The Korean Marines dug in and for the next 10 days sent patrols forward to the Pukhan River looking for suitable crossing sites. On the 18th, Korean Marine patrols crossed the river, secured key terrain on the north bank, and entered the town of Hwachon, unoccupied except for 11 Chinese who were captured.

At 0700 on 21 April, the 1st Marine Division renewed the attack toward Quantico Line with the 7th Marines on the left, the 5th Marines in the center, the 1st KMC Regiment on the right, and the 1st Marines in reserve. As aircraft from Marine Fighter Squadron 312 flying off the USS *Bataan* (CVL 29) pummeled CCF troops, both U.S. and Korean Marines met little opposition as they advanced the first 5,000 to 9,000 yards. The Korean Marines crossed the Pukhan River using rubber boats and amphibious trucks and occupied the high ground east and northeast of Hwachon in the usual formation of two battalions up and one back. Colonel Richard W. Hayward's 5th Marines, and the 7th Marines, commanded by Colonel Herman Nickerson, Jr., achieved both of their objectives on Quantico Line.

The long expected Chinese counterattack began late on 22 April. As the 1st Marine Division prepared to advance beyond Quantico Line, a CCF prisoner



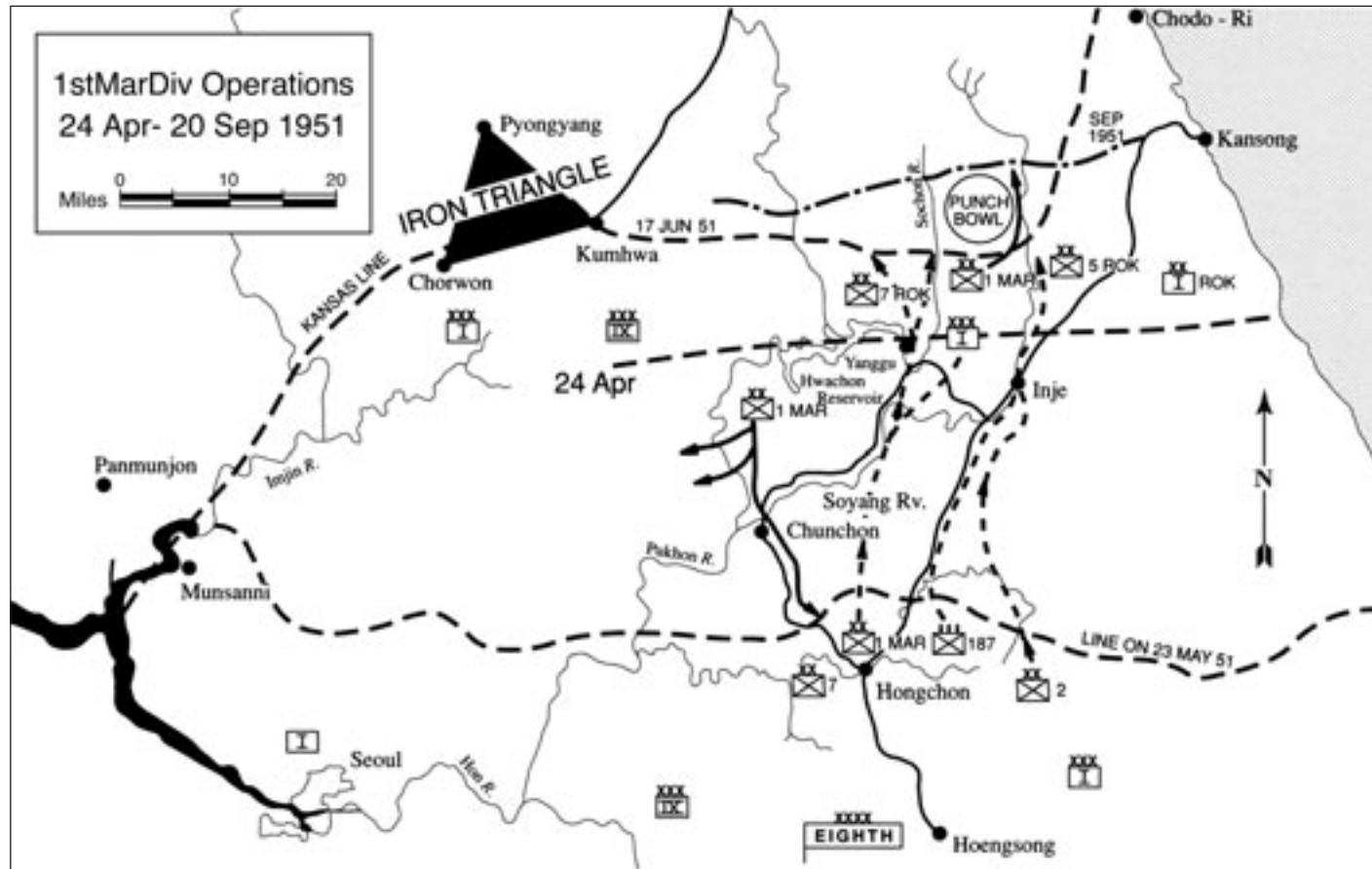
taken by the Korean Marines convinced General Smith and his staff that the CCF's offensive was only hours away from being launched. Smith canceled the advance and ordered all of his units on full alert. By 1930, the 1st Marines had been placed on full alert and by 2400 the reserve unit was on its way to reinforce the division's left flank to meet the expected enemy assault. While the 1st Marines were enroute, the Korean Marines and the 5th Marines began to absorb the full impact of the Chinese counterattack. Although the first blows fell on the 2d KMC Battalion on Hill 509, the 1st Battalion on Hill 313 also came under heavy attack, was partially encircled, and forced from the high ground. Major Kim Jung Shik quickly notified Colonel Hayward's 5th Marines of the possibility of an enemy breakthrough.

After a furious nightlong battle

that pitted squad-sized U.S. Marine and KMC units against a well-armed enemy on Hills 313 and 509, the U.S. and Korean Marines gained the upper hand by dawn of 23 April. During the assaults, Marine platoon commanders and squad leaders demonstrated the soundness of Marine training as three squads of Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, led by Second Lieutenants Harvey W. Nolan and Patrick T. McGahn, attacked Hill 313 and eventually dislodged the Chinese forces who had emplaced machine guns in the seesaw battle. In one of the assaults, led by Sergeant William Piner, Marine riflemen advanced slowly under a blanket of well-directed machine gun fire by Chinese troops. After three attempts, the Marines forced the Chinese to withdraw as reinforcements arrived from Company F, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, to assist in the final assault.

Even as the 1st and 2d Battalions, 5th Marines, took Hill 313, a vigorous counterattack by Korean Marines, who displayed excellent tactical proficiency in the assault, forced the Chinese from Hill 509. General Smith, who was shortly to turn command of the 1st Division over to Major General Gerald C. Thomas, commended the 1st KMC Regiment for their stubborn defense and spirited counterattack. In a message to Colonel Kim Suk Bum, the KMC's second commandant, Smith wrote: "Congratulate you and your fine officers and men on dash and spirit in maintaining your positions against strong enemy attacks. We are proud of the Korean Marines."

As a result of the Chinese attacks, the division's forward units were ordered to withdraw a short distance, in most cases less than a mile. In the Korean Marine zone, the 3d Battalion took up positions



in the left of the regiment's sector, while the 1st Battalion withdrew through the 3d to a position in the rear as regimental reserve. On the morning of 24 April, the battalions withdrew again, this time crossing the Pukhan River. By late afternoon, two battalions were in position on the crescent-shaped ridge-line south of the river with one to the rear in reserve. Although there were rumors of Chinese popping up everywhere by the thousands, it was not until the night of 24 April that sizeable numbers crossed the Pukhan. On the afternoon of 26 April, a further withdrawal was ordered, and the battalions moved off their mountain positions, forded the Soyang, and occupied the high ground south of the river. The following day, the KMC regiment, with the rest of the 1st Marine Division, received orders for a third and final withdrawal to the high ground between the Soyang and Hongchon Rivers. Patrols to the front had no enemy contact since the rapid U.N. withdrawal as perennial CCF logistical problems had left the Chinese far behind.

To fill the gaps in the ranks caused by the recent fighting, a draft of more than 200 replacements joined the regiment on 6 May. They arrived, however, without weapons or equipment (canteens, haversacks, helmets, and cartridge belts). Out of the regiment's meager stores, collected primarily from casualties, the replacements were fitted with weapons, although they were still short of a number of equipment items.

Meat in the troops' diet also was a problem; there was very little. At the beginning of the conflict, the Korean government agreed it would be responsible for all class I (rations) supplies for its troops. A good agreement, but it did not

put meat in the KMC mess kits. What was supplied was the Oriental counterpart to American C-rations manufactured in Japan, which the Koreans disliked. As Colonel Harrison later noted: "the truth of the matter was that the Koreans despised everything Japanese and abhorred the thought of Nips making profits off the Korean War." Consequently, Korean Marines often forcibly took the few remaining cattle from local farmers and slaughtered them. Since General Thomas would not tolerate this type of action, he sanctioned the issuance of the meat can in the C-rations from time to time. As the assistant division commander, General Puller, said: "If you're going to fight 'em you got to feed 'em." By the end of the first week of May, the Korean Marines had established patrol bases overlooking the vital Chunchon-Hongchon road and strong defensive positions to the rear.

### Action in the Punchbowl

The blunting of the Chinese counteroffensive by the counter-attack of the U.S. 3d Infantry Division to the east was followed immediately by a resumption of the advance by U.N. forces. On 22 May, the 1st KMC Regiment, supported for the first time by a platoon of five tanks, jumped off to seize two limited objectives—Hills 248 and 463—just three miles from the front. The objectives were occupied and the following day the regiment was relieved by elements of the 31st Infantry and moved by truck four miles northeast of Hongchong, only a mile from where it started the offensive two months before. About this time, Colonel Kim Tae Shik, a battalion commander during the Seoul and Wonsan operations,

assumed the post of regimental commander.

The regiment's rest in reserve was not long, and on the 25 May it started north. The three Korean Marine battalions moved rapidly through two valleys leading to the Soyang River—history was repeating itself practically over the same ground. In the advance, an ever-increasing number of Chinese prisoners were being rounded up by Korean Marine patrols. On 29 May alone, 59 prisoners were taken. Even a Chinese paymaster with his bags full of money was caught in the net. To press the advantage, the 1st Marine Division ordered the advance to speed up, and on 30 May, the 1st and 3d KMC Battalions crossed the Soyang River and moved along the axis of the Yanggu road toward the east end of the Hwachon Reservoir. The 2d Battalion plunged directly north into the wilderness leading to the south bank of the reservoir with the 7th ROK Regiment on its left. By the last day of May, Korean Marine patrols had reached the reservoir's south bank.

On 2 June, the 3d ROK Regiment arrived and relieved the Marines, who were shuttled to an assembly area south of Yanggu. The next afternoon, the three battalions moved forward and occupied positions on the high ground in preparation to relieve the 5th Marines on 4 June.

The KMC demonstrated its growing tactical proficiency beginning on 4 June in the assault on Hill 1122 or, as it is known by Korean Marines—the Battle for Taeam-san Ridge. In support of the renewed effort of the 1st Marine Division to extend its zone 5,000 yards to the east of the Soyang River valley, the KMC was brought out of division reserve not only to relieve Colonel



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A156047

*Col Kim Tae Shik assumed command of the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment in late May following the blunting of the second Chinese counteroffensive. A battalion commander during the Seoul campaign, Col Kim would lead the regiment in the battle for Taeam-san Ridge, where it would earn acclaim.*

Hayward's 5th Marines, but also to free the 2d Infantry Division for the mission of mopping up in X Corps' rear. Three Marine regiments were now in line, the 1st Marines on the left, the KMC in the center, the 5th Marines on the right, and the 7th Marines in reserve.

The 1st KMC Regiment drew the most difficult sector of the main line of resistance, a rather extensive, gruesome looking mountain range that extended northeast from Yanggu to Hill 1316 (Taeam-san), the highest point in that part of Korea. Along the ridgelines, the Chinese had placed NKPA troops with only one order: "Hold until death." From the air, the ground in

front of the South Koreans resembled a monstrous lizard, rearing upon its hind legs. The two came together at the rump, Hill 1122. From this position, the backbone ran northeast to the shoulders, Hill 1218. Still farther northeast, along the neck, was the key terrain feature—Taeam-san, the head of the reptile.

Despite liberal use of artillery and close air support during their first assault on Taeam-san, the three battalions ran into stiff opposition from elements of an NKPA regiment of the *12th NKPA Division*, commanded by Major General Choe Am Lin. The crafty NKPA commander was quick to realize the tactical value of the

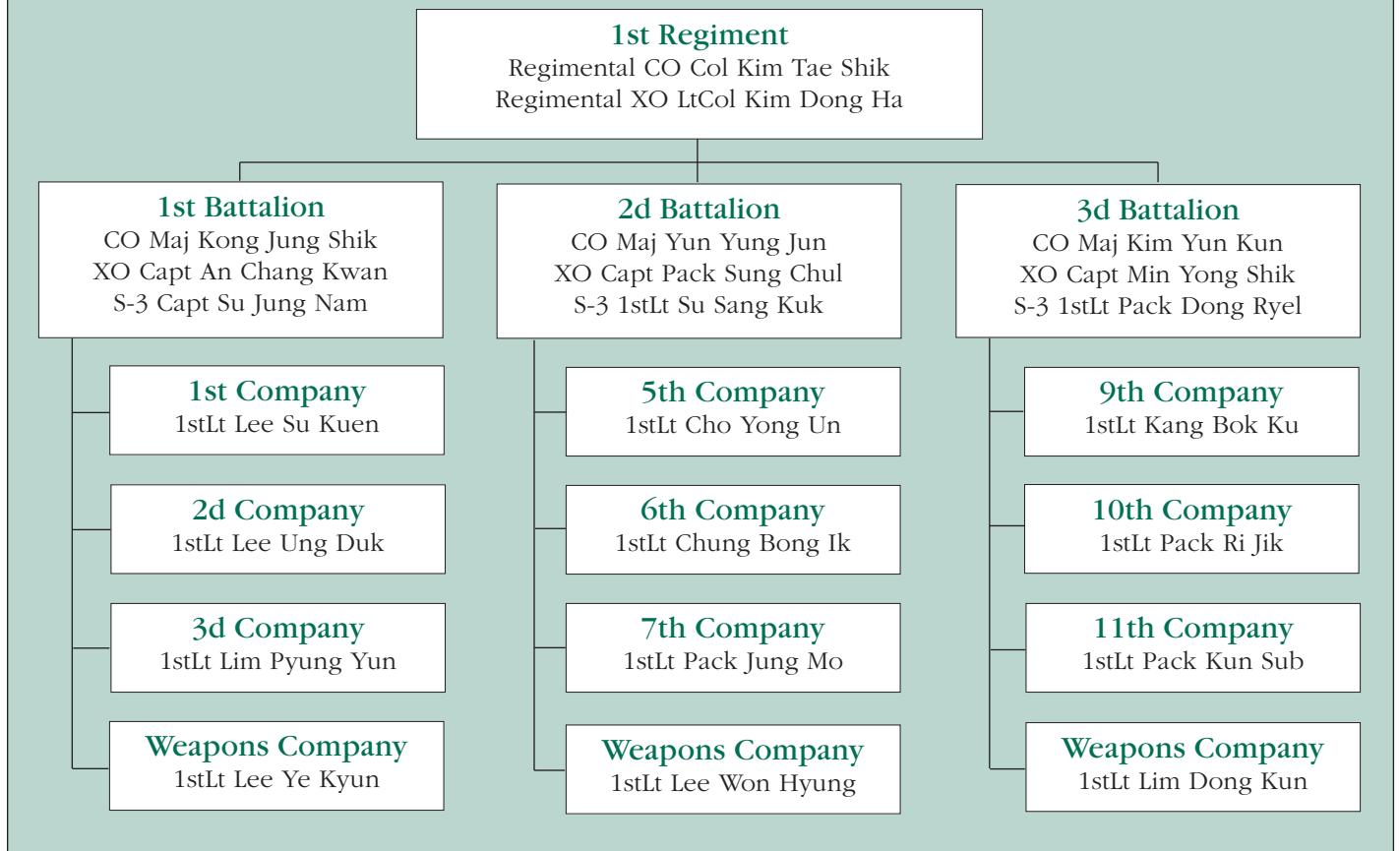
height and sought to make the KMC pay dearly for every inch of ground. This can be seen in the manner in which the NKPA dealt with the Korean Marines, who upon capture were summarily executed with a pistol shot to the back of the head.

For five days, 4-9 June, fighting raged around Taeam-san and the surrounding ridgelines. Because of the rugged, narrow terrain, the South Korean Marines were forced to attack in a formation that resembled a long thin spear rather than the blow of a heavy battering ram. Even when they managed to scale the heights, the enemy launched a furious counterattack and pushed them off. Not since the ill-fated attack of the 1st KMC Battalion in September 1950 against Hill 104 on the western outskirts of Seoul had the Korean Marines been up against such an entrenched and determined enemy. With losses mounting, the regimental commander decided to change tactics to break the back of the enemy defenses.

At 2000 on 10 June, the South Koreans decided to gamble on a night attack. Since the Chinese and North Koreans had used night attacks more frequently than U.N. forces, Colonel Kim concluded this could possibly catch the enemy off guard. He was right, for when the Korean Marines launched the next attack at 0200 on the morning of 11 June, most North Korean troops were either attending to garrison duties or were asleep. The three battalions fell upon the unsuspecting enemy "like an avalanche." Hill 1122, the center of resistance, fell to the KMC, and when it did, so did the remainder of the ridgeline. The North Koreans paid a heavy price that night, while KMC casualties were relatively light—five killed and 37 wounded. By the morning of 12 June, the battle for



## Table of Organization June 1951



Taeam-san was over and mop-up operations cleared the remnants of the enemy forces off the mountain without difficulty. In recognition of the bravery displayed by the Korean Marines, General Thomas sent the following dispatch:

Congratulations to the KMC Regliment on a difficult job well done. Your seizure of objectives on the Kansas Line from a determined enemy was a magnificent dash of courage and endurance. Your courageous and aggressive actions justify our pride in the Korean Marines.

The bitter fighting on Taeam-san was to become typical of the fighting in Korea. While U.S. and Korean Marines slugged their way

ahead during the day, the NKPA probed Marine lines by night, with each advance requiring a massive amount of firepower. This pattern lasted for several days before the Marines finally broke the resistance of the NKPA, who then fled from the hills surrounding Taeam-san.

As truce talks between the Communist and United Nations negotiators began, the fighting raged on. The defensive sector along Kansas Line west of the Yanggu road and north of the reservoir, which was assigned to the 1st Marines, left the enemy holding the high ground to the north. The regiment began pushing for a modification of the line to gain a better defensive position. The division bought the proposal and ordered Major Kong Jung Shik's 1st KMC Battalion to seize

Hill 1304 and then attack northwest to Tusol-san, the dominating piece of ground of the western rim of the strange geological formation soon to be christened the "Punchbowl." On 15 June, Major Yun Yung Jun's 2d KMC Battalion attacked north toward Hill 1304, which it seized the following day. Meanwhile, Major Kim Yun Kun's 3d KMC Battalion, following the 2d in trace, struck northwest along the ridgeline toward Tusol-san. As it approached the mountain, enemy resistance stiffened and frontal probes met with little success. On the night of 18 June, Major Kim's 3d Battalion launched an attack to capture the tactically important mountain. The battalion's 10th Company attacked straight along the ridgeline from Hill 1304. Meanwhile, its 11th Company, led by Captain Pak Kun

Sup, made a turning movement through the valley then up toward the ridgeline north of Tusol-san. The simultaneous attack from the southeast and north so surprised the enemy that his resistance collapsed.

As U.N. forces consolidated their gains after pushing back a combined CCF-NKPA offensive, Eighth Army adopted a defensive strategy in wake of the armistice talks that began at Kaesong that same month. In keeping with this strategy, General Thomas issued an order on 22 June that directed all three infantry regiments to establish battalion-sized patrol bases along the line. The KMC did the same. They dug trenches and erected bunkers, strung barbed wire, planted mine fields, and patrolled daily to the front, particularly toward Taeu-san (Hill 1179), where the enemy maintained a strong outpost.

On the morning of 7 July, the Marine liaison officer with X Corps alerted Colonel Richard G. Weede, the division G-3, to expect an order directing the seizure and establishment of a patrol base on Taeu-san the next day. The 1st KMC Regiment, warned by telephone, had very little time to plan and prepare for an attack. Since the Koreans could not be relieved of the responsibility for their sector, it was necessary to form a makeshift battalion of three companies (from the 1st and 2d Battalions). Unfortunately, they contained a large proportion of recruits and the battalion commander had only recently reported on board to take command.

There were two avenues of approach. The obvious avenue of attack was down the ridgeline leading north from Tusol-san and then west to Taeu-san. The other called for a descent from Tusol-san into a valley generally parallel-



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jun 1951

*Anytime there was a break in the action, U.S. Marines, assisted by interpreters, would hold familiarization school for Korean Marines on current or new weapons, such as the 75mm recoilless rifle, which the regiment received after the battle for Taeam-san.*

ing the main line of resistance and then up the steep slopes of Hill 1100, about a half-mile south of Taeu-san. The Koreans used both routes of approach. While one company advanced on the right by way of the valley, the other two took to the ridgeline on the left. The assault, which was to have been preceded by air strikes and an artillery bombardment, kicked off at 1030 on 8 July minus the air support, which had been canceled due to a soupy fog that cast its gray shadow over the entire battlefield. Despite heavy enemy resistance, the attack achieved some initial success as the companies gained a toehold on Hill 1100 where the advance ground to a halt.

The Korean Marines dug in for the night and repulsed a series of counterattacks. On the morning of 9 July, as one company broke contact and returned under orders to rejoin its battalion, the regimental commander, Colonel Kim Tae

Shik, committed the 2d Battalion, which jumped off from Hill 1100 toward Taeu-san. Strong enemy counterattacks drove the battalion back and off the hill. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, led by Major Kong Jung Shik, jumped off toward Hill 1001, but encountered booby traps, mines, and heavy small arms fire. Once again, the Korean Marines advanced without air or artillery support as the fog that hindered the previous day's attack remained over the battlefield.

Colonel Gould P. "Pappy" Groves, who replaced Colonel Harrison as the senior U.S. Marine liaison officer with the 1st KMC Regiment, recommended the battalion be withdrawn. Although the 1st Battalion had managed to capture Hill 1001, it was obvious to all that the enemy's continued heavy resistance made the recapture of Hill 1100 impossible, at least for the moment, and that the KMC could not take Taeu-san as

planned. On 12 July, the 1st Marine Division informed X Corps the position held by the Korean Marines just north of Hill 1001 fulfilled the requirements for an advance patrol base and recommended that no further efforts be made to capture Taeu-san. X Corps concurred.

The Korean Marines suffered more than 220 casualties in their valiant assault on Taeu-san and Hills 1100 and 1001. Shortly after the actions near Taeu-san, the 1st KMC Regiment, along with the rest of the 1st Marine Division, went into corps reserve as the U.S. 2d Infantry Division assumed control of the sector occupied by Marines. It subsequently would require the

entire division to wrest Taeu-san from the enemy.

In reserve, the 1st KMC Regiment received what one observer described as “its most thorough training it had ever known,” this given that all the while it had been fighting alongside its U.S. Marine counterparts. Each of the 1st Marine Division’s three regiments sent four training teams to the four KMC battalions. Beginning on 22 July, these training teams consisted of a first or second lieutenant, a noncommissioned officer, and an interpreter. The 12 teams, one assigned to each KMC company, remained with their South Korean counterparts until 20 August. During this period, the

U.S. Marine advisors cross-trained members of each company in the use of small arms, company-level weapons, weapons maintenance, small unit tactics, and administration.

As it trained hard, it likewise expanded in size. According to General Kang, by 1 August, the Korean Marine Corps numbered approximately 4,000 men, with 3,200 of them assigned to the 1st KMC Regiment, while 800 served with the 5th Separate KMC Battalion, which was assigned to man defensive positions in and around the Kimpo Peninsula. As for the regiment’s organizational structure, it now resembled that of a U.S. Marine regiment, consisting

*A three-man Korean Marine crew fires a .50-caliber machine gun at a forward patrol base. Regimental policy was to keep one company out on a patrol base, rotating this assignment every few days.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A156474





of three infantry battalions, a regimental headquarters, a 4.2-inch mortar company, and a 75mm recoilless rifle platoon. The regiment's new commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Kim Dong Ha, who replaced the wounded Colonel Kim Tae Shik.

### Fighting Along the Kansas Line

On 27 August, the 1st Marine Division, along with the KMC, returned to the line in time for the renewed effort in the Punchbowl.

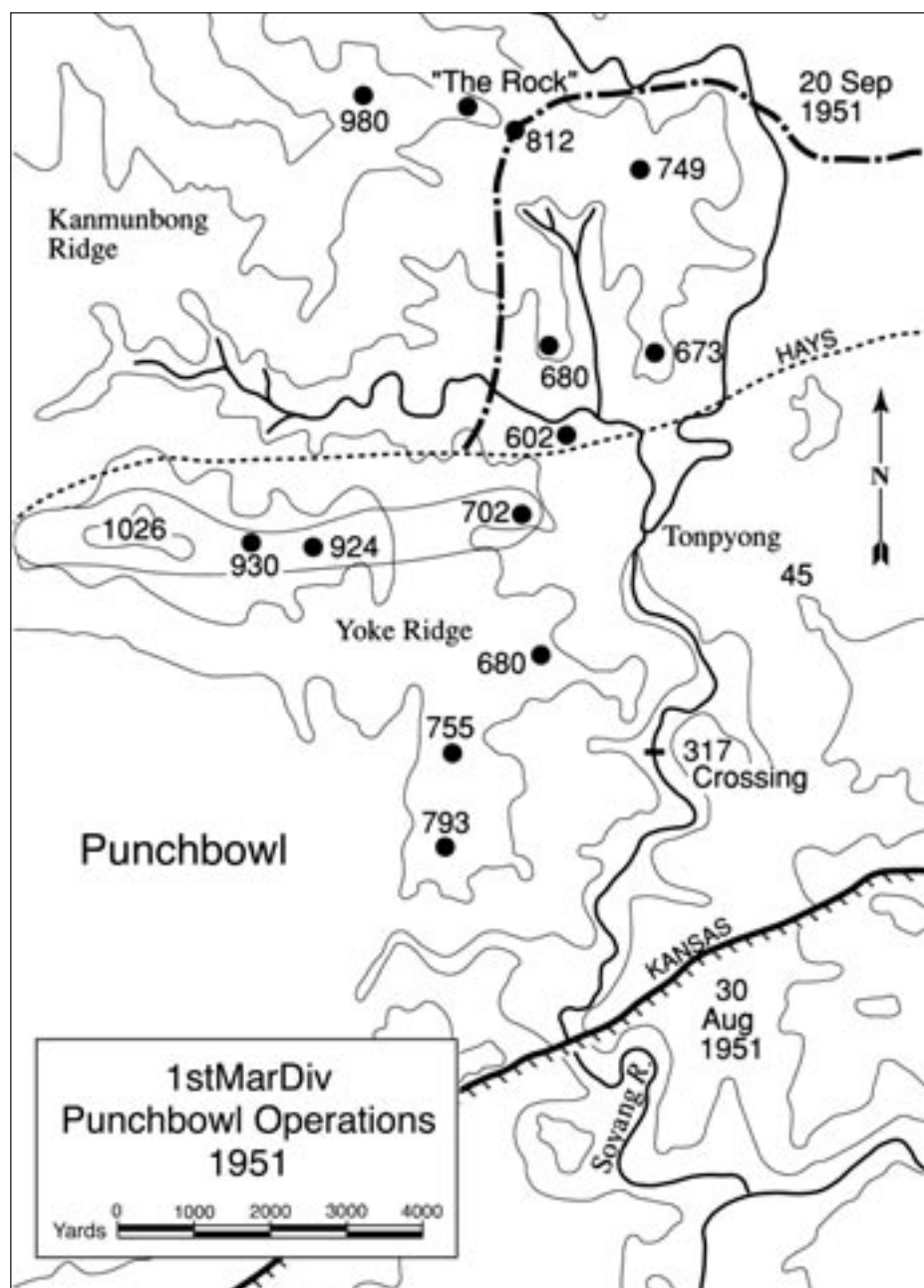
The 7th Marines and 1st KMC Regiment were assigned to relieve U.S. and Korean army units along the Kansas Line, while the 5th Marines had orders to reinforce the 7th Marines as it marched up the narrow Soyang Valley.

Despite having to march in a torrential downpour to its objectives, both the 7th Marines and the 1st KMC Regiment reached their assigned positions by afternoon on the 29th. The 2d KMC Battalion relieved the French battalion assigned to the 2d Infantry

Division, while the 2d and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines, completed the relief of elements from the 8th ROK Division.

Division Operations Order 22-51 directed two assault regiments, the 7th Marines and the 1st KMC Regiment, to attack at 0600 the following day and seize assigned positions on corps Objective Yoke, the ridgeline running from Hill 930 on the west through Hills 1026 and 924 on the east. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, already occupied Objective 1, a hill mass one-and-a-half miles northeast of Tonpyong. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, was ordered to seize Objective 2, generally that part of Yoke Ridge east of Hill 924. The 1st KMC Regiment was assigned Objective 3, which was the seizure and occupation of Hills 924 and 1026. As both U.S. and Korean Marines moved toward their objectives, small arms fire and land mines slowed their advance. Meanwhile, a number of prisoner reports indicated the enemy planned to hit the Marines along the Kansas Line on 1 September, which prompted the division's intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel James H. Tinsley, to suspect the enemy's Sixth Phase Offensive might be about to begin. Consequently, both the 7th Marines and 1st KMC Regiment prepared for the expected enemy onslaught.

In preparation for that attack, the two KMC battalions received priority for close air support missions. As the two battalions jumped off in columns on 31 August with Marine aircraft overhead, they met only moderate resistance on their advance up Hill 924. Enemy minefields gave the Korean Marines more trouble at first than the scattered enemy mortar and machine gun fire. The 1st KMC Battalion conducted a passage of lines through the 3d



Battalion and met increasing enemy resistance as it pushed toward its objective. On its right flank, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, also encountered light resistance, which increased as the Marines neared their objective. Taking advantage of the sloping terrain, the enemy commander planted mines along the most likely avenues of approach on Hill 702. Forced to take alternate positions, which had been bracketed by the enemy, the forward elements of 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, were hit by a concentration of mortar and artillery fire. East of the Soyang, on the regiment's right flank, where Objective 1 had been occupied without a fight, the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, supported the attack of 3d Battalion with mortar fire. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, and the Korean Marines were within 1,000 yards of their objectives late in the afternoon when a halt was called for the day. Minimal losses were due in large measure to the excellent air and artillery support.

When the attack resumed on 1 September, Major Kim Yun Kun's 3d Battalion conducted a passage of lines through positions occupied by 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, to reach a ridgeline on the flank of the regimental objective. While the 3d Battalion advanced from the northeast, Major Kong Jung Shik's 1st Battalion closed in from the southeast. Both battalions suffered heavy losses from enemy mines and mortars, as well as from machine gun and automatic weapons fire from hidden bunkers. The converging attack made slow but steady progress until one company of the 3d Battalion drove within 200 meters of the top of Hill 924 at 1700. It took four more hours of hard fighting to secure the objective. That evening, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, relieved the



Department of Defense (USMC) A157705

*Following a U.S. Marine artillery preparation, Korean Marines charge an enemy bunker complex as part of the 1st Marine Division's plan to seize a series of commanding ridgelines surrounding the Punchbowl.*

2d KMC Battalion of its defensive responsibilities, enabling the battalion to join in the attack.

Throughout the day, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bernard T. Kelly, slugged it out in the vicinity of Hill 702 with an NKPA battalion, which launched four different counterattacks with as many as 500 men. While some of the enemy troops briefly penetrated the battalion's lines, they were beaten back with the help of supporting air and artillery strikes from Colonel Custis Burton, Jr.'s 11th Marines, which poured a deadly concentration of 105mm artillery fire on the North Korean troops. Kelly's battalion continued to fight off the enemy attacks until dusk.

The tenacity of the NKPA's defense was again demonstrated on the KMC when they were driven from the top of Hill 924 by a surprise enemy counterattack at midnight. But the Korean Marines showed their own determination on the morning of 2 September, and following a terrific firefight,

the North Koreans were evicted around noon. The guns of Major Gordon R. Worthington's 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, fired 1,682 rounds of 105mm ammunition in direct support of the KMC assault on Hill 924. At the same time, the guns of Lieutenant Colonel McReynolds' 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, fired 1,400 rounds in support of 3d Battalion, 7th Marines. The 11th Marines' other battalions, reinforced by elements of the U.S. Army's 196th, 937th, and 780th Field Artillery Battalions, brought the total number of rounds fired during the 24-hour period to 8,400.

After Major Kim Byong Ho's 2d Battalion secured Hill 924, it conducted a passage of lines through the 1st and 3d Battalions to spearhead an attack toward Hill 1026. In the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines' zone, Company H repulsed an enemy counterattack at 0700 with mortar and machine gun fire, and then moved out to resume the attack on Hill 602. Lieutenant Colonel Kelly ordered his battalion's heavy machine guns to set

up in battery order to deliver overhead supporting fires. In less than two hours, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, swept the crest of Hill 602 and secured the division's Objective 2. After taking Hill 602, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, repulsed three company-sized enemy counterattacks before the North Koreans withdrew to the north at 1500.

The 2d KMC Battalion fought its way to a point within 800 yards of Hill 1026 before dusk. So aggressive and persistent was the NKPA defense that several light enemy probing attacks were launched during the night of 2 September, not

only against forward Marine elements, but also against the 5th Marines on the Kansas Line, five miles to the rear. The fluid nature of the front meant fighting could erupt anywhere and everywhere and at any time.

While Kelly's Marines constructed emplacements and obstacles on Hill 602, the South Korean Marines continued their attack toward Hill 1026 on the morning of 3 September. With the extending of the 7th Marines zone to the left to decrease the width of the KMC front, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, was brought up from regimental reserve to help cover a new sector

that included Hill 924. The attack led by Major Kun's 2d Battalion collided with a large-scale enemy counterattack. The fighting raged for more than three hours before the NKPA broke off contact, and by mid-morning on 3 September, the Korean Marines were in possession of the division's Objective 3. They quickly consolidated defenses for the expected enemy counterattack, which came at 1230 and lasted for two hours before the NKPA once again broke contact and retreated. This action by the KMC completed the battle for corps Objective Yoke. At 1800, on 3 September, the 1st Marine

*Korean Marine Corps mortar men prepare to launch a mortar shell. Along the main line of resistance during the winter of 1951-1952, three battalions of Korean Marines con-*

*tinued to maintain a vigorous forward patrol effort while improving their defenses in case of an enemy counterattack.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A160234





Division was in full possession of the Hays Line, which dominated the western side of the Punchbowl.

On 4 September, with all objectives consolidated, 1st Marine Division units patrolled northward from defensive positions. Division planners already had been laying the groundwork for the second phase of its attack on the Punchbowl, which was to advance a further 4,000 to 7,000 yards to seize the next series of commanding ridgelines. As for the price of the last offensive, it was not cheap. During the four-day battle, a total of 109 Marines (U.S. and South Korean) were killed and 494 were wounded. North Korean casualties were even higher with 656 killed and 40 taken prisoner. As the U.S. and ROK Marines consolidated their positions, replaced worn equipment, and replenished depleted stocks of ammunition, the next phase of the fighting in the Punchbowl resumed. For the remainder of September, the 1st KMC Regiment occupied the Hays Line and conducted vigorous patrols north of the division's positions as it awaited new orders to resume the attack.

By 1 October, seven infantry battalions manned the division's main line of resistance—three KMC battalions on the left, two battalions from the 5th Marines in the center (relieved by the 7th Marines on 11 October), and two battalions from the 1st Marines on the right. The mission of the KMC and of the 1st Marine Division remained virtually unchanged as they conducted numerous foot patrols far into enemy territory and initiated company-strength tank-infantry raids supported by Marine aircraft and artillery. In one such raid, conducted on 17 October, a reinforced KMC company, supported by tanks, air, artillery, and

combat engineers, attacked enemy positions about 875 yards northwest of Hill 751 and 1,500 yards south of Hill 1052. During the day-long raid, the Korean Marines destroyed 25 NKPA bunkers, killed 15 enemy troops, captured 3 prisoners of war, and netted 5 machine guns.

On 21 October, the front of the 1st Marine Division was reduced a mile when elements of the 3d ROK Division relieved Major Kim's 2d Battalion on the Marine left flank in accordance with instructions from X Corps. A total of six infantry battalions now manned the 12-mile front.

Throughout the remainder of 1951, the 1st Marine Division continued to occupy the eastern portion of the X Corps defense sector in east-central Korea. From left to right the 1st KMC Regiment, 7th Marines, and 1st Marines held the main line of resistance with two battalions each. The 5th Marines remained in reserve until 11 November when it relieved the 1st Marines, which went into reserve at Mago-ri. As Marines continued patrols and efforts to improve their defenses, the KMC added its own artillery support—the 1st Korean Artillery Battalion consisting of two medium (155mm) and two light (105mm) howitzer batteries. The 2d KMC Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kim Doo Chan, was organized as were engineer and medical companies. In the spring of 1952, the 1st Marine Division, along with the 1st KMC Regiment, received orders to move across the peninsula to western Korea. The regiment was the first unit to move to its new positions along the extreme left flank of the Eighth Army, where it was given the mission of guarding the approaches to Seoul along the Jamestown Line. By 24 March, the 1st Marine Division and 1st KMC Regiment

had relieved elements of the 1st ROK Division along the left sector of the main line of resistance, adjacent to the British 1st Commonwealth Division, and were in position to continue sector outpost security and ground defense in what had become a war of attrition.

## On the Western Front

As the Marines of the 1st Division prepared to occupy positions along the Jamestown Line, the efforts of the Marine liaison groups began to take noticeable effect on the KMC's battlefield proficiency, which was increased tenfold. On 11 February 1952, in response to a request from the Commandant of the Korean Marine Corps, the 1st Marine Division activated the Korean Marine Corps Advisory Group (KMCAG), which consisted of six officers and 11 enlisted Marines. The U.S. Marine advisors provided assistance in an advisory capacity to the Commandant of the Korean Marine Corps and his staff. Shortly thereafter, the KMCAG came under the administrative control of the Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, which had a similar team providing advice to the ROK Navy.

Along the Jamestown Line, elements of the 1st KMC Regiment and units of the 1st and 5th Marines manned security outposts, dug field fortifications, built defensive positions, conducted aggressive foot patrols, and drove back small enemy probing attacks. The division, now commanded by Major General John T. Selden, consisted of 1,364 officers and 24,846 enlisted Marines, 1,100 attached naval personnel (doctors, corpsmen, and Seabees), and 4,400 officers and men of the 1st Korean Marine Regiment. It also had operational control of several I Corps reinforcing artillery units in its sec-



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A161982

*Camouflaged Korean Marines on patrol pause to check the route. The Koreans frequently drew the sector with the roughest terrain and least number of roads. The reason often given for the assignment was that the Koreans were better "mountain goats" than U.S. Marines.*

tor. On 31 March, another major infantry unit, the Kimpo Provisional Regiment (KPR), was organized to augment the fighting strength of the division.

### Kimpo Provisional Regiment

General James A. Van Fleet's transfer of the 1st Marine Division to western Korea aimed to strengthen the defenses of the approaches to Seoul and the Kimpo Peninsula. Several units, the 5th KMC Battalion, the U.S. Marine 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, and the 13th ROK Security Battalion (less one company), had been assigned to the protection of the peninsula. Their operations, while coordinated with I Corps, were of a more inde-

pendent nature. The fixed nature of the Kimpo defenses provided for neither a reserve maneuver element to help repel any enemy attack that might occur nor a single commander to coordinate the operations of the defending units.

These apparent weaknesses prompted concern for the security of the Korean capital, which lay just east of the bases on the Kimpo Peninsula, separated only by the Han River. Also located on Kimpo was the key port of Inchon and two other vital installations, the logistical complex at Ascom City and the Kimpo Airfield. All of these facilities were indispensable to the U.N. war effort. To improve the security of Kimpo and provide a cohesive, integrated defensive line, General Selden formed these

independent commands into the Kimpo Provisional Regiment and placed Colonel Edward M. Staab, Jr., in command. This unique command functioned in a tactical capacity only and had no administrative duties.

In addition to maintaining security on the division's left flank, the KPR was given the mission of protecting the support and communications installations in that sector "against an airborne or ground attack." To support the KPR's tactical mission, General Selden placed the division's artillery and motor transport assets at its disposal.

For ease of control, the KPR commander divided the peninsula into three sectors. The 5th Separate KMC Battalion occupied the northern sector, dominated by

## Training a Republic of Korea Marine

The training of a Republic of Korea Marine was patterned after that of a U.S. Marine. Like his U.S. Marine counterpart, recruits for the Korean Marine Corps (KMC) reported to the Marine Recruit Training Center at Chinhae, near Pusan. There, recruits underwent a grueling eight weeks of basic training patterned after that of the U.S. Marine Corps recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, and San Diego, California. Upon completion of recruit training, the basic Marine reported to the 1st KMC Regiment or the 5th KMC Battalion. Upon arrival at the regiment, the Marines were formed into a provisional recruit company for additional infantry training, much like that received by a U.S. Marine at the Infantry Training Regiment at either Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, or Camp Pendleton, California. Here, the basic Marine received classes in small unit tactics, weapons familiarization, first aid, field hygiene, and field sanitation.

Training cadre for the provisional organization comprised assigned officers and noncommissioned officers of the different battalions under the direction of the regiment's operations officer. This training period usually lasted about four weeks, at which time the Marine was assigned to a permanent regimental unit. After joining a combat organization, the new Marine received additional on-the-job training. Korean Marine officers coupled this training with as much formal instruction and practical work as possible for units occupying a sector of the main line of resistance. In view of the static situation during the winter of 1951-1952, and the increased number of replacements, small unit instruction among the units increased considerably.

As time permitted, the Marine was given more comprehensive training while his battalion remained in regimental or division reserve. Corps training cadre carried out all instruction under the direction and supervision of the battalion commander and his staff.

U.S. Marine Corps personnel performed an important training role, but only through the Korean Marine Corps Advisory Group's battalion liaison officer. This officer contributed materially to the training of the battalion through his continuous contact with and influence on the battalion staff. The U.S. Marine Corps officer's role was one of advisor, with final decisions resting with the KMC battalion and company officers. When they were available, the 1st Marine Division and Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, provided additional Marine officers, noncommissioned officers, and corpsmen to the KMC for specialized training.

During July and August 1951, when the 1st Marine Division was in reserve, an extensive training program was undertaken by the 1st KMC Regiment. During this period, the division assigned a U.S. Marine Corps ad-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8215

sory to each KMC company. The teams consisted of an officer, a noncommissioned officer, and an interpreter. This further enhanced the training of the KMC though the team's expert advice and on-site demonstrations of various infantry techniques. This demonstration-style instruction proved to work well among Korean Marines, as did the use of training aids such as disassembled M1 Garand rifles, machine guns, mortars, and sand tables.

Marine advisors also provided classes in infantry tactics for KMC platoon, company, and battalion commanders. This training was carried out exclusively by U.S. Marine Corps officers selected from the various regiments that were on the main line of resistance. These officers prepared outlines of instruction, which they then submitted to the U.S. Marine liaison teams for review and revision to make them relevant to their KMC comrades. The liaison teams ensured these instructions were basic in content and terminology, and that they were delivered effectively to the KMC officers. For their part, the KMC officers designated to attend classes were not required to speak English. Instead, the lecture by the U.S. Marine instructor was delivered in English and then translated into Korean by the interpreter. After each thought or idea was presented to the students, the instructor stopped to allow the interpreter to explain it in Korean. In this manner, maximum emphasis was given by the instructor and transmitted to the students. As a means to reinforce the lessons presented in class, every KMC officer attending the class received a set of translated lecture notes for his personal use.



commanding terrain. The ROK army battalion occupied the southern portion and was assigned the protection of Kimpo Airfield and the containment of any attempted enemy attack from the north. Both the KMC and the ROK army units provided security for supply and communication installations within their sectors. The western sector was held by Company A, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, less two platoons. The company had the mission of screening traffic along the east bank of the Yom River, which flanked the western part of the peninsula. Providing flexibility to the defense was 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, the designated maneuver battalion, then in reserve and on call in case of an enemy attack.

The unit adjacent the KPR in the division line in late March was the 1st KMC Regiment. Commanded by Colonel Kim Dong Ha, the regiment assumed responsibility for its portion of the Jamestown Line at 0400 on 20 March with orders to organize and defend its sector. The regiment placed the 1st and 3d KMC Battalions on the main line of resistance, with the 2d Battalion in the rear as regimental reserve. Holding down the regimental right flank was the 1st Battalion, which shared the boundary with the 1st Marines until 29 March when the 5th Marines entered the lines and assumed the defense of the sector between the regiment and 1st Marines. To bolster the defenses along the Jamestown Line, General Selden added the remaining companies of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion to the four regiments on line, making a total of five major units manning the front. Inserted between the KPR and the 1st KMC Regiment, the amphibian tractor companies added to the division's maneuverability along the line.

Enemy units facing the Marines along the Jamestown Line were both tough and considered first-rate by the division's intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tinsley. The units located directly beyond the 1st Marine Division's sector included elements of the *65th* and *63d CCF Armies*. Together, the enemy armies numbered 49,800 troops. Opposite the west and center sectors of the division's lines was the *65th CCF Army*, with elements of the *193d Division* opposing the Kimpo Provisional Regiment and the *194th Division* facing the 1st KMC Regiment. The U.S. Marine regiments faced the *195th Division*, *65th CCF Army*, which had placed two regiments forward. North of the division's right lay the *188th Division*, *63d CCF Army*, which also had two regiments forward. In support of the estimated 15 enemy infantry battalions were 10 artillery battalions with a total of 106 guns of varying calibers (75mm to 155mm). Intelligence reported the presence of the *1st CCF Armored Division* and an unidentified airborne brigade located near enough to the front to provide support if needed.

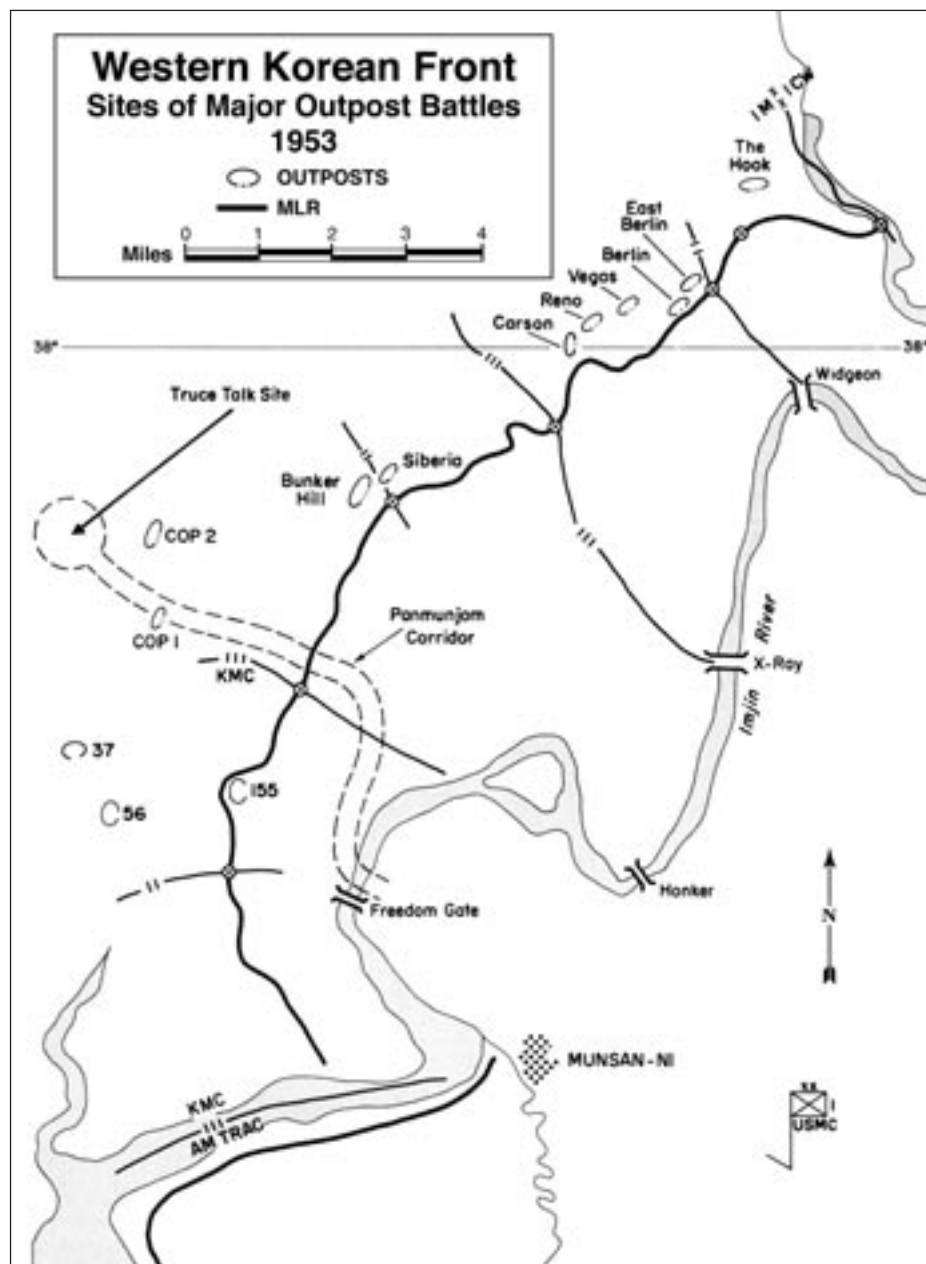
### Fighting Along the Jamestown Line

Surprisingly, the Chinese did not interfere with the 1st Marine Division as it dug in along the Jamestown Line. This changed toward the end of March as the enemy increasingly probed the Marines' lines. From 25-31 March, the first week along the Jamestown, the division reported five separate attacks that included some 100 Chinese soldiers per probe. Most of these occurred against the 1st KMC Regiment, a front the Chinese believed was the weakest sector of the line.

The 1st KMC Regiment held the area containing Freedom Gate, the best of three bridges spanning the Imjin River. Both of the other two, X-Ray and Widgeon, were further east in the division's sector. If the Chinese could exploit a weak point in the KMC lines, capture Freedom Gate Bridge, and turn the division's left flank, enemy forces could pour into Eighth Army's rear and possibly retake Seoul. Without the bridge in the KMC sector, the division would "be hard pressed, even with helicopter lift, to maintain the regiments north of the Imjin."

At about 2130 on 1 April, the CCF launched its offensive, pounding KMC positions with a massive artillery barrage. A half hour later, Chinese troops launched a ground assault, hitting a Korean outpost and the main line. Marines of the 1st Company, 1st KMC Battalion, were the first to feel the brunt of the Chinese attack on the regiment's right flank. There, a Chinese company forced an opening between friendly outposts and reached a point about 200 yards short of the main line of resistance and just north of a road leading to the main bridge over the Imjin. While this attack was in progress, another CCF company hit the outpost line further south. This attack proved less successful, as the South Korean Marines were able to quickly muster sufficient strength to repel the invaders short of their objective. Battered and beaten, both Chinese companies withdrew at about 2345 to their own lines.

To the left of the 1st Battalion was Major Paik Nam Pyo's 3d Battalion, which received the force of the Chinese attack. The battalion's 9th, 10th, and 11th Companies (deployed in that order from west to east in the left battalion sector), had been engaged by the same preliminary



30-minute shelling. At 2200, four squads of Chinese attacked the two companies on the left while a company of enemy soldiers hit the left end of the 10th Company, occupied by the 2d Platoon. About midnight, the Chinese forced the South Koreans, under fire from both flanks and a heavy frontal assault, to withdraw. In the rear, the company commander pulled the 1st Platoon from the line, ordered the 3d Platoon to extend to the left to cover both sectors, and led a counterattack with the 1st Platoon and elements of the 2d,

which quickly restored the line. As soon as one attack ended a second began. Throughout the early morning hours of 2 April, the Chinese repeatedly attacked and then pulled back as the South Koreans, backed by Marine artillery and mortars, forced them to retreat. In the action, which ended at sunrise, the CCF sustained two confirmed killed and an estimated 34 killed and 10 wounded. The Koreans suffered two killed and 10 wounded. To all 1st Division Marines, the successful defense by the 1st KMC Regiment was “heart-

ening,” as it preserved not only the division’s western flank, but also kept open the road to the Imjin. Lastly, the time and effort the advisory group had spent on the Korean Marines paid huge dividends, since it had successfully trained one of the most capable military formations to stand and fight on its own.

## Raiding and Reconnaissance

Fighting along the Jamestown Line eventually settled into a series of actions from both sides designed to wear down the opposition. U.S. and Korean Marines, as well as the CCF, dug in, firing at each other with artillery and mortars, digging trenches, and carrying out “trench raids” in a type of fighting reminiscent of the trench warfare on the Western Front during World War I. The 1st Marine Division conducted what amounted to an “active defense” to keep the Chinese forces off balance.

One combat raid involving three platoons, less a squad, of the 10th Company, 3d KMC Battalion on 5 April typified the night activities along the main line of resistance. Division intelligence officers, who wanted to capture and interrogate prisoners, recommended the KMC launch the raid. The South Korean Marines departed their positions along the line at 2300. They worked their way over the low ground and then crossed the Sachon River. Immediately thereafter the raid leader, First Lieutenant No Won Keun, 10th Company commander, set up two squad-sized ambushes along the patrol route. The raiders then continued northwest toward their objective, an area near the village of Tonggang-ni and half a mile beyond the river. About 50 yards from its objective, the patrol ran into tactical wire and an enemy



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A161959

*Two Korean Marines prepare themselves for one of the many tank-infantry patrols conducted on the western front. When they took up their positions on the main line protecting Seoul in the spring of 1952, Korean Marines had gained a great deal of experience in operating with tanks.*

sentry, who alerted his unit by rifle fire. The Korean Marine raiders opened up and called in pre-planned mortar and artillery support. The Chinese defenders replied with rifle and machine gun fire.

To complete the maneuver, the patrol leader positioned his machine guns to fire on the Chinese flanks and directed one platoon to prepare for a frontal assault on the defenders. At 0148, the 1st Platoon attacked from the right. A minute later, the 2d Platoon charged headlong at the defenders. Hand-to-hand fighting followed until the Chinese broke contact and disappeared into bunkers within the trench line. From inside, the CCF soldiers continued the battle, firing through revetments and wounding several KMC pursuers in the legs. After 30 minutes had passed, the South Korean assault troops observed

enemy reinforcements moving in from the northwest. At 0230, the Korean Marine patrol withdrew under cover of a massive artillery barrage and reached its parent battalion along the main line at 0400. The raiders brought back with them seven civilians found in the area, as well as several Russian-made carbines. At a cost of two killed and 18 wounded, the 1st and 2d Platoons inflicted 12 killed and an estimated 25 enemy wounded.

### Chinese Offensive Continues

On 12 and 13 April, Chinese Communist forces stepped up their ground actions, signaling the start of another attack against the 1st Marine Division along Jamestown. The CCF launched two probing attacks against the 5th Marines, which occupied the center regimental sector. Both attempts were

beaten back. The 1st Marines on the extreme right flank encountered little hostile activity, but in the western KMC sector, Chinese shelling increased noticeably. The artillery picked up again the following day, accompanied by several infantry probes directed against the two KMC frontline battalions. To the right, the Chinese tested the 5th Marines' lines again. While these probing attacks slackened a bit as the month progressed, the CCF continued to throw artillery shells against the Marines.

In the early morning hours of 17 April, the Chinese launched a more serious night attack against the 1st KMC Regiment. Beginning at 0100, the CCF launched a 15-minute preparatory barrage against the South Korean Marine's 3d Battalion, which occupied the regimental right sector. The CCF then probed friendly lines in and



around the area pounded during the preliminary fires. Three separate attacks took place before 0400, when the KMC forced the Chinese to withdraw. In these probing actions, Chinese troops made free use of automatic weapons. Confirmed casualties listed two Korean Marines and 36 Chinese troops killed and five KMC and an estimated 70 Chinese wounded. As a further sign of their growing battlefield prowess, Korean Marine observers frequently called in their own artillery support, oftentimes nearly on top of their own positions. Generally, the CCF attacks were beaten back by rifle and machine gun fire. This enemy attack proved to be the last for the rest of the month as the Marines settled in for their second month along the Jamestown Line.

With the addition of 6,800 yards to the front, which stretched the division's main line to more than 35 miles, General Selden found it necessary to reduce the general outpost line to build up the main

line of resistance. The 1st KMC Regiment reduced its outpost line of resistance to that of an outpost line of observation, and the left battalion pulled its main line back to more defensible ground. On 23 and 24 April, the Marine division's center and right regiments withdrew their outpost lines as well. Both regiments then established forward outposts and listening posts, which were manned only during daylight hours. Abandonment of the forward outpost line not only added strength to the main line, but also meant that frontline battalions had to commit all their companies on line, thus losing their reserve. To prevent the Chinese from occupying the abandoned Marine positions along the former outpost line, the division dispatched combat and reconnaissance patrols forward of its line. In the KMC sector, the only Marine area favorable for tank operations forward of Jamestown, tank-infantry patrols were periodically sent out.

*In addition to ROK Marines, other South Korean military personnel assisted U.S. Marines. Among them were Lt Hahn, left, who served as a liaison officer, and Lt Lee Bok Youl, who aided in translation between Republic of Korea armed forces and the 1st Marine Division's intelligence section.*

Photo courtesy of SSgt Clayton E. Ham



To the west of the KMC sector, beginning 16 April, the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Michiel Dobervich, was assigned a section of the line to defend. Reinforced by the division's reconnaissance company, led by Major Ephraim Kirby-Smith, Lieutenant Colonel Dobervich employed two platoons from Company C, the headquarters tracked landing vehicle platoon, and the reconnaissance unit to man 30 defensive positions from the Han River eastward to the KMC western boundary.

While the Korean Marines carried on an active patrol program, they began to experiment with helicopter-borne operations, a relatively new concept the U.S. Marines had already undertaken that same year. On 18-19 April, the helicopters of Colonel Keith B. McCutcheon's Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161 launched Operation Leapfrog, which involved the transport of one KMC battalion across the Han River to the Kimpo Peninsula and lifted out another the following day. The purpose of the test was to determine the feasibility of a replacement movement conducted over water with "consideration given to the language barrier existing between the troops and the transporting facility." The six-mile round trip was the shortest troop haul yet made by the transport squadron. It took the 12 Sikorsky HRS-1 helicopters only three hours and 26 minutes to transport and exchange the 1,702 KMC troops.

Colonel McCutcheon's chopper pilots discovered that, due to the smaller size and weight of the average Korean, their helicopters could transport six combat-loaded Korean Marines rather than the standard five U.S. Marines. Since

the U.S. and KMC Marine battalions were the same size, the larger load factor for the South Korean Marines enabled their unit to be moved faster. During Operation Leapfrog, the language difference proved to be no handicap, since there were a sufficient number of interpreters on hand and the troops were cooperative. Helicopter pilots could use landing sites close together because the terrain was open and the area of operations was beyond the reach of Chinese artillery.

### Actions Along Korea's Coastlines

Prior to its 23 December 1951 departure from Korea, Britain's 41 Independent Commando unit was charged with the defense of the outlying islands off the east and west coasts and their use as a base for raiding missions. Local guerrillas trained by the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Navy proved largely incapable of establishing a proper defense of these islands once 41 Commando departed. Soon after the two islands closest to the Yalu River were taken, the Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, rushed a battalion of ROK Marines to the islands considered to be the most strategic for South Korea's defense. By early 1952, U.S. Marine Corps detachments were actively coordinating their defense with Lieutenant Colonel Kim Doo Chan's 2d KMC Regiment, which provided a majority of the defending forces.

Actions on the island of Ho-do, a small speck of dirt located 400 yards from the North Korean coastline, was another example of the intensity of the fighting in Korea. In March, in compliance with an order from the Commander Task Group 95.1, the West Coast Island Defense



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-433572

*Korean Marines man a .50-caliber machine gun on the island of Hwangto-do in Wonsan harbor. Within sight of the mainland, the island provided a base for intelligence and counter-guerrilla activities.*

Element's commander, Colonel William K. Davenport, Jr., sent a reinforced KMC platoon to occupy the island. But during the night of 25 March, the platoon lost the island to a coordinated enemy amphibious raid. Only six South Koreans managed to survive the bitter fight that followed the landing on Ho-do. They made their way back to the base camp located on Sok-to, but the others were never seen again and the island was not reoccupied.

South Korean Marines performed similar activities on Korea's eastern coast. Under control of the U.S. Navy, the Marines operated from the island of Yo-do in the Sea of Japan, which was used

as a base to support further raids against the North Korean and Chinese supply networks ashore. The Koreans were charged with the island's defense and with handling naval gunfire spotting missions. The East Coast Island Defense Element numbered approximately 35 U.S. Marines, 1,270 Korean Marines, and 15 U.S. Navy personnel. Yo-do, one of the largest installations in the island defensive network, was manned by 300 Korean Marines and a small detachment of Marine and Navy personnel. Smaller defense forces were located on the other islands, such as Mo-do, Taeco-do, and Hwangto-do, under the East Coast Island Defense Element's com-

mand. The defense element's primary mission was to hold the offshore islands as a base for covert intelligence activities. The island defensive system existed for the purpose of "containing and destroying any enemy forces who escape detection or who press home an attack in the face of Navy attempts at their destruction." On 1 January 1953, both East and West Coast Island Defense Elements were designated as task units.

### Outpost War Continues

From May to the end of December 1952, the front remained virtually unchanged as negotiators met first at Kaesong, and later at the permanent location in the village of Panmunjom. The primary missions of the KMC remained the same—strengthening of the Jamestown Line and conducting "swift, vigorous, and violent" raids against the enemy to secure vital intelligence.

Initiating the infantry action

along Jamestown in May was the 1st KMC Regiment, which held the division's left flank with its 1st and 2d Battalions on line. At dusk on 3 May, a platoon-sized raiding party, under Second Lieutenant Kim Yung Ha, left an outpost forward of the 1st Battalion line on a prisoner-taking mission and headed for the objective, Hill 34, adjacent to the rail line to Kaesong and about a half mile west of the Sachon River. When the platoon was within approximately 1,000 yards from its goal, Lieutenant Kim ordered a support squad to take up positions near a trail and stream juncture to ambush any enemy attempting to attack the raiders from the rear. The remainder of the platoon, two assault squads, continued forward toward the objective, moving cautiously and halting for an hour because of the bright moonlight.

After midnight, the moon disappeared under a blanket of clouds and the Korean Marines pushed on toward their objective. They advanced toward a village south of

the objective. After conducting a search of a few houses and not finding any enemy, they moved on toward their objective. As soon as the objective came into sight, the Marines positioned themselves for the assault. At 0140, two squads charged the knoll, immediately drawing heavy Chinese small arms fire. When the raiders continued the assault, the enemy retreated to his trenches and bunkers from which he continued to fire on Lieutenant Kim's Marines. Realizing there was little chance of successfully taking a prisoner, Lieutenant Kim called for artillery fire to cover his withdrawal. He broke off the ongoing 18-minute firefight and withdrew with his only casualty, a wounded rifleman. The Korean Marines counted 12 enemy dead. Unfortunately, the support squad incurred three killed and seven wounded as they battled with Chinese troops in a separate although related engagement.

Formed on 5 May, the Korean Marine Corps Tank Company consisted of 181 men with 17 M-4 Sherman tanks and one tank retriever. There were seven 1st Division Marines, one officer, and six enlisted men (four from the 1st Tank Battalion and two from the Ordnance Battalion) assigned as a liaison team. The Korean tank company received its training in combat under the direction of Company A, 1st Tank Battalion. On platoon was committed in May for training in combat patrols and the entire company was committed on 12 July to relieve Company A in support of the Korean Marine regiment.

On 24 June, the front briefly exploded with a series of Chinese probing attacks on 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, followed by a brief lull in the fighting. Then on 29 June, the lull ended when the 1st

*U.S. Marines PFC Walter C. France, left, and Sgt Harold E. Rogers welcome two Korean Marines to their dugout behind the main line of resistance. By the summer of 1952, Marine positions included many creature comforts.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-442565





KMC Regiment sent out a raiding party to capture Chinese soldiers and their weapons and equipment, to inflict casualties, and to destroy enemy positions. Second Lieutenant Kwak Sang In set out with his reinforced platoon from the 3d Company, 1st KMC Battalion. The raiders, equipped with rifles, carbines, machine guns, flamethrowers, and explosives, headed for an enemy outpost four miles south of Panmunjom and overlooking the Sachon River.

Lieutenant Kwak's patrol followed the general pattern of previous raids. The Korean Marines made good use of supporting elements positioned on high ground in front of the objective. In this action, the patrol struck the enemy positions from the rear, using artillery fire for both the assault and the withdrawal. Once again, determined enemy resistance prevented Lieutenant Kwak from taking prisoners although the patrol did inflict a similar number of enemy casualties as the accompanying flamethrowers and explosives enabled the ROK Marines to destroy the Chinese bunkers. In addition to the toll on enemy soldiers and emplacements, members of the 3d Company destroyed a mortar and numerous small arms. On 3 July, a similar raid by another KMC unit killed nine Chinese soldiers along its sector while actions by Colonel Thomas C. Moore's 7th Marines inflicted similar losses on the enemy. On 9 August, during the fighting for Bunker Hill, M-26 Pershing tanks from the 1st Tank Battalion supported a KMC unit that fought to expel enemy troops attempting to penetrate the defensive outpost. For the remainder of August, the Chinese appeared content to hold what they had gained in the Bunker Hill battle.



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A134444

*MajGen John T. Selden, Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, chats with a Korean Marine while visiting a U.S. Navy hospital ship at Inchon. Earlier in the war, Korean Marine casualties usually ended up in Korean army hospitals and were thus lost forever to the Korean Marine Corps.*

In September, the South Korean Marines received special attention from the Chinese as they directed the bulk of their offensive operations against their sector of the line. At dusk on 5 September, a Chinese artillery barrage began to smash Outpost 37, the first of three positions that received hostile attention for the next 22 hours. Throughout the next day, the Chinese continued the mortar and artillery fire against Outposts 37 and 36, as well as the regimental observation post located on Hill 155 (also called Hill 167) to the rear of the main line of resistance. The heaviest enemy fire was directed against Outpost 36, a small rise in the lowland terrain midway between the Sachon River on the west and the Munsan-ni-Kaesong rail line, 600 yards to the east.

At 1605, a 50-round barrage struck Outpost 36. After this harassing fire there was a lull until 1810 when Chinese artillery and

mortars again resumed a steady pounding of the three positions. One hour later, enemy soldiers hit both outposts. The enemy attacked Outpost 37 twice, although neither appeared to represent a serious threat. Such was not the case at Outpost 36. Here, Chinese forces moved into assault positions on the west, north, and northeast sides of the outpost. At 1910 they began their first attack. It was repulsed, as was a second. Regrouped and reinforced with tanks and supporting artillery fire, the Chinese made a third and successful assault on the 3d KMC Battalion's position. At 2150, a squad leader from the 10th Company reported that his position had been overrun. The KMC nonetheless made the Chinese pay in blood for their gains. Shortly after the 10th Company had reported its position overrun, the Chinese abandoned Outpost 36, apparently due to the heavy casualties. With communications re-

stored, the South Korean Marine company commander reported the Chinese had suffered 33 known killed with a further 83 wounded. He likewise reported the Chinese had departed in haste, leaving behind automatic weapons and about 100 hand grenades. The Korean Marines suffered nine dead and seven wounded at Outpost 36, while at Outpost 37 there were four casualties. At the regimental command post, one Korean Marine and two U.S. Marines were killed in the fighting.

After the stepped up enemy activity in early September, both Chinese and Marine frontline units resumed their earlier pattern of combat patrols, probes, and ambushes. Possession of the Bunker Hill position remained the immediate objective of the enemy and his activities in the middle of the Marine line were directed to that end. Major General Edwin A. Pollock, who had succeeded General Selden as the commanding

general of the 1st Marine Division, placed the division on full alert, with the KMC assigned to the defense of Outposts 37 and 36, the defense of Hills 37 and 86. Still on the division's western flank, the KMC conducted frequent tank-infantry patrols during the second and third weeks of September, but the enemy opposite the KMC initiated little ground activity. Instead, the Chinese relied upon their supporting weapons to provide the contact. For a seven-day period ending 19 September, a total of 2,375 enemy rounds fell in the regimental sector, an average of 339 per day. Nearly a third were in the vicinity of Hill 36.

Before sunrise on the 19th, a Chinese infantry company crossed the Sachon in the vicinity of the railroad bridge. Once on the east side, the enemy soldiers concealed themselves in the caves and holes and remained there until dusk. When they came out of the caves, and after a short briefing from

their commanding officers, they organized into three attack groups. As these infantry elements approached their objective, Outpost 36, other enemy units prepared to seize Outpost 37, to the east, and Outposts 33 and 31, both to the south. Chinese artillery and mortar preparations supported these diversionary raids.

A massive artillery bombardment accompanied the Chinese infantry assaults on the observation posts. As the three CCF assault units reached the bottom of the hill at Outpost 36, artillery, mortars, and tanks had fired more than 400 rounds. Approaching from the north, east, and west, the Chinese scrambled up the hill, gaining control of the wrecked defenses by 2000. Sporadic exchanges of fire lasted until nearly midnight. At 0115, the Korean Marines retook part of the hill, but the counterattack was cut short upon the discovery of another enemy unit moving toward the outpost, then less than a mile away. Three hours later, the enemy came back in strength when a CCF platoon successfully regained the outpost at 0520. This new assault occurred without any warning and was so swiftly executed that a number of the KMC defenders found themselves encircled and trapped at their posts. Most escaped, although the Chinese managed to capture several and eventually evacuated them along with their wounded at the end of the battle.

Another attempt to regain the outpost was made by the Korean Marines at 1400 following artillery preparations and two air strikes. Three aircraft squadrons, Marine Attack Squadrons 323, 121, and 212, blasted the Chinese on the front slope of Outpost 36 with bombs, rockets, and napalm. The contour of the far side of the hill provided the enemy a defiladed

*A South Korean Marine artillery crew prepares a 105mm howitzer for action as enemy troops mount another offensive against the Sachon River area in the fall of 1952.*

Photo: "A Marine Matches Thousands of Enemies"



position and safety from the 1st Marine Division's artillery. Nonetheless, the air strikes had the desired impact, destroying many CCF automatic weapons, mortars, and enemy strong points, and dazing the defenders to allow the Koreans counterattack to overrun the position. Two KMC platoons, supported by artillery, mortar, and tank fire, retook the outpost after overcoming what CCF resistance remained. After the enemy abandoned Outpost 36, Chinese troops remained in the low area northwest of the combat outpost. No serious attempt was made by the enemy to occupy the position for the rest of the month.

The 20-hour clash for control of Outpost 36 was believed to have developed from the CCF's desire to occupy the position and eliminate the harassing fire from Hill 36 that had struck Chinese mainline troops. Their attempt to secure the high ground did not come cheap; Korean Marines counted 20 Chinese killed and estimated a-

nother 130 were wounded. Korean losses were just as costly, 16 killed, 47 wounded, and 6 missing.

Despite the temporary setbacks during the two-day fight on Outpost 36, the performance of the South Koreans confirmed the general opinion that the KMC had evolved into a first-class, reliable fighting force. As General Pollock commented later, the Korean Marines "were great. ... I thought they were fine. We depended on them entirely for the whole left flank of the division." General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., who had recently become Commandant of the Marine Corps, and who was on an inspection tour of the division, likewise praised the proficiency of not only his Marines, but also those of the 1st KMC Regiment upon hearing about their performance on Outpost 36.

While the KMC were not the only ones to receive attention from the CCF, they nonetheless felt the full impact of the enemy's probing attacks. While forced to abandon

Outposts 36 and 37 after a valiant defense, the heaviest CCF attack occurred on 2 October against the KMC platoons defending Hill 86. Nearly a battalion of Chinese took part in this action, eventually overpowering the defenders just before midnight. The defenders withdrew south to the bottom of the hill where they were comparatively safe from enemy fire. After resting, regrouping, and adding reinforcements during the early morning hours of 3 October, the Korean Marines watched as U.S. Marine artillery and air units pounded the enemy troops in the outpost prior to their counterattack. At 1015, the Korean Marines launched their attack, which succeeded in clearing the outpost of Chinese troops after two hours of bitter fighting.

While the enemy countered the ground loss of Hill 86 with artillery and mortar fire, Marine air attacks flushed out the remaining Chinese who had retreated only a short distance from the outpost. From atop the hill, Korean Marines witnessed many of the enemy hurriedly leaving the area. This scattering of the enemy force prevented the CCF from launching an immediate counterattack for control of Outpost 86 and gave the Korean Marines additional time in which to prepare their defenses. At 2200 on 6 October, an enemy force of undetermined size assaulted the position and wrested it from the Koreans before the end of the day. Early the next morning a KMC counterattack was successful. But devastating blows from Chinese artillery compelled the Koreans to withdraw at 0640. Loss of the third key outpost during the first week of October ended for a time the outpost fighting in the left regimental sector of the division front.

Later, in the fighting around the terrain feature known as the

*Two Marines of the 5th KMC Battalion clean their 3.5-inch bazooka at a roadblock on Hill 155, the most prominent terrain feature in the KMC's sector of the line and the site of intense enemy interest.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A162984





“Hook,” the Chinese attempted to seize critical ground surrounding the division’s flanks. Although the majority of these attacks failed, the enemy acquired six outposts early in the month—three in the western KMC sector and three north of the regimental line. On the last day of October, two hours before midnight, the CCF again struck the Marine left flank. This time they directed their efforts against four outposts that screened Hill 155, the most prominent terrain feature in the KMC regimental zone. The fighting that developed was brief but sharp, and would be the most costly of all KMC clashes during this third winter of the war.

The attacks by the Chinese came as no surprise to the 5th KMC Battalion, occupying Outposts 39, 33, and 31 in the northern regimental sector, or 2d KMC Battalion personnel atop Outpost 51 in the southern (western) half of the main line of resistance. The four outposts assisted in the defense of the line (particularly Hill 155 just inside the line), since it afforded observation of the approach routes used by the CCF and served as a base for friendly raids and rallying points for offensive operations.

Hill 155 overlooked both the wide Sachon Valley and Chinese frontline positions to the west. This critical Korean hill also commanded a view of the Panmunjom peace corridor, Freedom Gate Bridge, and the Marine division area east of Jamestown Line in the KMC sector. Hill 155 had further tactical importance in that it protected the left flank of Paekhak Hill, the key ground in the entire 34-mile expanse of Jamestown within the 1st Marine Division territory.

The probability of a determined enemy attack against the four outposts had been anticipated since



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A162983

*A Korean Marine stands watch in a trench line connecting bunkers on Hill 155. The fighting that developed in the outposts surrounding Hill 155 would be the most costly of all Korean Marine clashes during the third winter of the war.*

early October following CCF seizure of three positions (former Outposts 37, 36, and 86) in their strike against the KMC regimental outpost line of resistance. The enemy had then proceeded to organize an outpost line of his own with the two northern outposts, Outposts 37 and 36, and informally occupied another position to the south and one to the north in the vicinity of Outpost 39. In assessing the enemy’s probable course of action, the KMC commander on the scene reasoned: “Once firmly organized, the enemy will have an excellent jump off point toward our Outposts 39 and 33, his next probable objectives.” Sporadic probes throughout the month of October on Outposts 39 and 33 areas indicated a continued enemy interest in the positions. Outpost 51, to the south, was considered another likely target due to its position immediately east of Outpost 86, already taken by the Chinese.

Prior to attacking the four outposts on 31 October, the CCF sig-

naled their intentions by sharply stepping up artillery and tank fire against the sector. During the 24-hour period ending at 1800 on 30 October, a total of 1,881 rounds slammed into the KMC positions along Jamestown Line, most against the two northern outposts, 39 and 33. Nearly 1,500 rounds fell the next day. Scouts also reported more than 50 sightings of enemy troops and weapons in the forward areas. By contrast, during the previous week, less than 15 observations of enemy activity had been made daily and, on the average, only about 200-340 rounds of fire had fallen in the entire sector. Despite this comparatively moderate rate of hostile fire, the enemy claimed one KMC killed and three wounded in late October from well-placed mortar or artillery rounds striking the outpost.

After two days of heavy shelling, the regiment warned of attacks in its daily report issued only two hours before the Chinese launched their full-scale attack:

The enemy has made a consistent two-day effort to destroy friendly outpost positions. Last night, at 1830, two enemy companies were observed in an apparent attempt to attack OPs 39 and 33. Artillery fire broke up the attempt, but continued enemy artillery today indicates further attack is probable tonight. If enemy artillery preparation is indicative, a simultaneous attack against Outposts 39, 51, 33, and 31 can be considered probable.

These earlier observations and predictions as to the enemy's intentions were confirmed when

*Korean Marines who form the "clutch platoon" climb on board a truck to be taken to the main line where they will go into blocking positions in the event of an enemy attack. Members of Headquarters Company, 1st Marines, formed the bulk of the platoon.*

the CCF launched its new ground attack.

The Chinese attack began as Lieutenant Colonel Kang Ki Chun's 5th KMC Battalion took over the right regimental sector at 1700 on 31 October from the 3d Battalion. By this time, it had become a standard CCF tactic to hit outposts whenever there was a change or relief in the line. Both the battalions were on line at the time the Chinese launched their attack and remained there until the attackers withdrew. Beginning at 2200, enemy 76mm and 122mm guns delivered an intensive eight-minute artillery preparation against the four outposts held by the Korean Marines. Chinese

assault forces from four different infantry regiments launched a simultaneous attack on the South Korean positions. Moving in from the north, west, and south, two CCF companies, the *3d Company, 1st Battalion, 581st Regiment*, and the *2d Company, 1st Battalion, 582 Regiment*, virtually enveloped the northern outpost, Outpost 39. Two more unidentified CCF companies lunged against the two central outposts, Outposts 33 and 31, with a company assaulting each position. In addition to these two assaults, four companies, *4th Company, 2d Battalion, 584th Regiment*; and *1st, 4th, and 6th Companies, 585th Regiment*, assailed a company of Korean Marines positioned on the southern and most-heavily defended post, Outpost 51. Despite repeated assaults, the Korean Marines held their positions and forced the CCF to break off the attack much sooner than they had done at any of the other outposts.

At Outpost 31, a heavy firefight raged until 0155, when the defending Marine platoon halted the attack and forced the Chinese to make a partial withdrawal. To the northwest, at Outpost 33, the enemy encountered less resistance from the two squads manning the outpost. The Chinese achieved some success in penetrating the outer defenses, which they shortly occupied. Once again, the Korean Marines displayed their hard-earned tactical prowess and expelled the CCF at 0515 that same morning.

The enemy's efforts appeared to have been more successful, at least temporarily, at Outpost 39, the northern post and one nearest Hill 155. Although the Chinese were able to wrest some ground from the veteran KMC platoon, artillery fire continued to punish the enemy and by 0410 had forced him to

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withdraw from the area. A small force of Chinese soldiers returned at 0600 and was met by a hail of small arms fire from a fully alerted Korean Marine platoon, which turned them back. It was at this time the Chinese broke off their attacks on Outposts 33 and 31.

The strongest of the enemy probes was against Outpost 51. This was the most isolated of the Korean Marines' positions, almost 2,625 yards from the main line of resistance. While the outpost had largely been ignored in the preceding week, on 31 October elements of three enemy companies struck the southwestern trenches and defenses while a fourth attempted to break through from the north. However, the action was the least intense of the outpost probes by the CCF. After initial heavy fighting, the Chinese seemed reluctant to press the assault even though they vastly outnumbered the South Korean defenders deployed at the outpost. In the early morning hours of 1 November, the enemy broke contact and had withdrawn by 0330.

During the night, approximately 2,500 rounds of Chinese artillery and mortar fire struck the outposts. The Korean Marines, aided by friendly artillery fire, not only repelled the assaults, but inflicted severe casualties on the enemy. Supporting fires included those of the KMC's own 4.2-inch Mortar Company. The Korean Marines counted not less than 295 Chinese killed in and around the various outposts and estimated another 461 wounded—nine prisoners were taken. Unfortunately, Korean Marine losses were quite heavy—50 killed, 86 wounded, and 18 missing. By first light on 1 November, the KMC had thrown back at least five assaults. This ended the last significant action of October in the 1st Marine Division



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A170830

*Members of the 1st KMC Battalion unload from a helicopter of Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161 after being brought back from the front lines to the reserve area on the Kimpo Peninsula during Operation Leapfrog. The purpose of the lift was to determine the feasibility of a replacement movement conducted over water.*

sector of Jamestown Line.

Throughout the remainder of November and December 1952, the 1st KMC Regiment maintained its positions, conducted heavy patrols, and engaged the enemy in small skirmishes. As negotiations continued at Panmunjom, both sides sought to reinforce their defensive positions along their respective main lines of resistance. Neither appeared eager to resume the offensive.

### Fighting While Talking

As President Dwight D. Eisenhower assumed office in January 1953, talk of an armistice grew ever more frequent along the Jamestown Line. Despite the rumors of peace, the fighting continued unabated as Chinese and United Nations forces persisted in defending and probing each other's lines.

Marine and enemy small unit actions now were becoming a way of life. On the night of 13 February, the Chinese, who were displaying a "more aggressive attitude" than in months past, were attacked on Hill 240 by a KMC

two-platoon force. On 19 February, Chinese soldiers, in two-platoon strength, engaged KMC sentries on Outpost 33, located about a mile east of Hill 240. After an initial exchange of small arms fire, the Korean Marines called for supporting fire on the Chinese, forcing the enemy to withdraw after suffering numerous casualties. Suffering setbacks in further attacks during the remainder of February against the 5th and 7th Marines, the Chinese once again shifted their attention westward to the 1st KMC Regiment's area of responsibility. Here, the CCF launched a series of probing infantry and artillery attacks against the 1st KMC Regiment, now designated the 1st Korean Marine Corps/Regimental Combat Team (1st KMC/RCT), and the Kimpo Provisional Regiment. During the fighting along the Nevada cities outpost line, the CCF conducted platoon- and squad-sized attacks against both the 1st Marine Division and 1st KMC/RCT, which had been positioned further west along the main line of resistance.

In May, the 1st KMC/RCT, less its



artillery battalion, went into I Corps reserve. (Like the 11th Marines, the KMC artillery battalion remained on line.) At 1030 on 5 May, the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, relieved the KMC, which had been on the line for nearly 13 months. While its artillery and tank battalions remained in a support role, the KMC participated with the 1st Marine Division in a number of command post and field exercises. In mid-July, the division, including the 1st KMC/RCT and the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, were back in their accustomed sectors of the Jamestown Line after relieving the 25th Infantry Division. During the heavy fighting for the Berlin outposts and the defense of the Boulder City complex by the 1st and 7th Marines, the Korean Marines maintained their sector of the line against Chinese intrusions. At the time of the signing of the armistice, which terminated hostilities on 27 July, the 1st KMC/RCT was on the extreme western flank

of the main line of resistance, while the detached 3d Battalion and 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion were again given the mission of defending Kimpo Airfield. Around 1000, a Marine combat patrol exchanged fire with a Chinese squad conducting a similar mission. The Korean Marines' war did not end until all parties finalized the truce agreements later that day.

During the three years between the outbreak of the Korean War and the signing of the armistice, the Korean Marine Corps accumulated an impressive combat record, having served in 20 different combat areas and participated in five major combat campaigns. Among these were the landings at Tongyung, the Inchon-Seoul operation, the Dosolsan Mountain operation, the Kimilsung and Motaekdong Hills operations, and the Yang-do Island operation. During the last year of the war, the Corps provided the 1st Marine Division with nearly a quarter of its

combat strength and became the fourth infantry regiment of the division. In compiling its record, it killed an estimated 22,070 enemy soldiers (NKPA and CCF), wounded 39,419, and destroyed more than 34,423 pieces of enemy equipment and weapons.

From its modest origins at Chinhae in April 1949 to the signing of the armistice in July 1953, the Korean Marine Corps had matured into one of the most respected and certainly one of toughest fighting units to take the field. Yet there was a price to pay. In three years of combat, the Corps suffered 2,529 battle casualties (killed, wounded, and missing), a majority of which occurred on the Jamestown Line.

The spirit which guided the Corps during the Korean War, and one that still guides it today, is best summed up by First Lieutenant Kim Sik Tong who, in March 1951, wrote: "The KMC ideal is to complete the mission, regardless of receiving strong enemy resistance, with endurance and strong united power, and always bearing in one's mind the distinction between honor and dishonor." The officers and enlisted men of today's Korean Marine Corps carry forth with the same tradition established by their predecessors of the early 1950s, which is best summarized by Captain Geijung Sung, KMC, as the spirit of "*Pil-Sung*," or "We Must Win."

Among the United Nations forces committed to the far-flung battlefield that was Korea, it was the Marine component that stood out in its sacrifice, military skills, and devotion to duty. In Korea, allied Marines, whether American, British, or Korean, demonstrated the versatility, aggressiveness, and readiness that has always been the hallmark on those bearing the title "Marine."

*Eager Korean Marines pour from the rear ramp of an amphibious tractor after hitting the beach during an exercise on the South Korean coast. The company of Korean Marines accompanied the 5th Marines in the landing, which assumed realism with simulated naval gunfire, enemy artillery, and air attacks.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A171687



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